













THE  
LOST INHERITANCE.

—

VOL. I.



THE  
LOST INHERITANCE.

A NOVEL.

Life is real ! Life is earnest !  
And the grave is not its goal ;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle !  
Be a hero in the strife !

LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## DEDICATION.

To a very dear brother, is inscribed this first attempt to embody, in fictitious characters, feelings, aspirations, and sentiments, which he has often shared with

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON,  
JUNE, 1852.



# THE LOST INHERITANCE.

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## CHAPTER I.

There's nothing here, there's nothing in all this  
To satisfy the heart, the gasping heart !  
Mere bustling nothingness, where the soul is not.  
This cannot be the sole felicity—  
These cannot be men's best and only pleasures.

SCHILLER.

It was at a dinner-party at my old friend Mr. Colston's, soon after my return from the continent, when I saw for the first time his young favourite, Marion Harcourt ; I had heard Mrs. Colston speak of her as being a great acquisition to their society, not only from her accomplishments, but from her delightful conversation and amiable disposition.



She happened to sit nearly opposite to me at dinner, and I could not refrain from observing her. She was talking with apparent interest to her neighbour, who was an intellectual-looking man, about two or three and thirty. Although she was not strictly beautiful, Marion's countenance was certainly prepossessing ; she was fair, but not pale ; an open brow, and a mouth expressive both of sweetness and firmness ; her eyes were features on which no two people ever agreed, so varied was their expression, sometimes beaming with vivacity and sometimes clouded by a soft melancholy darkness. Her hair was of that light brown hue, which is bright as gold in the sun, it was hanging about her white shoulders in luxuriant ringlets : her dress was simple and elegant, but I never could remember how Marion was dressed, it always conveyed a pleasant idea to my mind, but its details were lost. She never appeared to condescend to all the changing forms of fashion, but her toilette seemed to constitute a part of her self, and was arranged to suit her own peculiar style.

I happened to be placed next a lady, who was deeply devoted to the business of a dinner,

that of paying great attention to the viands, which left me to employ my observation as I liked, for no conversation seemed to be required to enhance her amusement, indeed, answering some remark I happened to make, appeared sadly to disturb her enjoyment of a *cotelette à la Soubise*.

I could not hear what Marion said, but I amused myself in watching her countenance and surmising what called the smile to her lips, the faint blush on her cheek, and, still more, what could sometimes chill her young face into something of almost awe. There is to me unflagging interest in gazing on the young, as they step out from the hallowed sanctuary of home, and mix in the whirling scenes of society, bringing their pure feelings and warm impulses into the world's rushing excitement. I pause, and try to picture to myself what will be their fate in life; whether they will find any one to appreciate their bright yearnings for good, whether their feelings will bear the blighting influence of the world's heartlessness, and always cast a sunny light on its sorrows, or whether they will be corroded and embittered by the struggle, or, after suffering and nearly sinking, they will

bear up bravely and firmly against all discouragements.

These dreamy speculations were occupying me more than usual, as I watched Marion during that long dinner. I scarcely knew what to think of Mr. Murray, who was her neighbour, he seemed to have the gift of making his conversation agreeable to her, for they still kept talking on, apparently unconscious of any one else. At last the ladies rose to depart, and then we gentlemen began the interminable political discussions which seem reserved for the after-dinner subject of Englishmen. Before coffee was announced, we heard music in the drawing-room, and I could see several of the younger men were wearying of the still-continuing debate on the Corn-laws; I therefore proposed a move, and accompanied by Mr. Murray and one or two others, adjourned to the drawing-room.

As we entered, Marion was singing that most beautiful of Moore's melodies, "She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps;" her voice was a rich contralto, and she possessed the great art of the most distinct articulation of every word. Every one was silent; I could see she was nervous, by the heightened colour on her cheek and a slight tremulousness in her voice.

I felt a sadness steal over me as I listened to the melancholy tones. I could not help fancying some sorrow must be in store for one whose voice seemed to contain the essence of grief; it appeared almost an anomaly for so young and apparently cheerful a creature to pour forth such wailing sounds. I have often remarked that heavy-looking people possess an organ of clear, bird-like harmony, while the bright children of humanity express melancholy in their voices; it is a part of the mysterious chain which pervades all on earth, attaching suffering to us while in this vale of tears.

One gentleman petitioned earnestly for a merrier song.

“Do, Miss Harcourt, sing us something a little less ‘akin to tears;’ you surely do not confine yourself to such sad songs?”

“I shall be delighted to sing anything you like—that is to say, anything you can find in my book; my voice is unfortunately of too low a compass to sing anything. I fear, however, mine is but a collection of woeful ballads; however, I promise to sing any song you will select from either of those books.”

“‘All that’s bright must fade’—that will never do. Here is another sorrowful ditty, and

another ! why indeed, Miss Harcourt, you really seem to have selected your songs for their tearful tendency ; I cannot find a merry one among them.”

I saw Mr. Murray place a song on the desk, and with an entreating look he begged her to sing it, and assured his friend it was not so melancholy as the last. It was one of those lovely Italian ballads, half sorrowful, half sprightly, with a low sweeping accompaniment. Marion sung it charmingly, and then begun playing polkas and vales in rapid succession, to compensate, as she said, for inflicting such a dark shadow on people’s spirits. Some little nieces of Mrs. Colston’s who were present began to dance to Marion’s enlivening strains, and several of the gentlemen joined them.

Mr. Murray remained at the piano, and seemed to renew the conversation which had been interrupted at dinner. I was glancing over the “Times” in a corner of a sofa near them, and overheard part of their conversation.

“ So you are already tired of parties, Miss Harcourt ; you are one of the few young ladies who think life is too short to be galoped through, and that higher pleasures and deeper interests

may be found than the excitement of a ball or *fête*."

"I never cared much about parties. I cannot say I am tired of them, because I go to so few; sometimes I am amused with people I meet; I like to sit quietly and watch the different countenances and manners, particularly if I can talk to an intelligent person who will put me *au fait* to the positions and by-play of the principal actors in the scene. You go out so much, Mr. Murray, does it not seem to you very hollow, very heartless, this intercourse called society, when people meet night after night to whirl round to the last new valse, and never care to meet again?"

"I think you are rather severe upon society; how can you tell people never care to meet again? I am afraid you speak from experience; do you not know there is an under current in all things, that in the same way as your bass notes accompany the brilliant cadences of the treble you are now playing, so there are deep feelings below the superficiality of the world? have you never thought of the eager hopes, the wearing anxiety, the sorrow, which is concealed beneath apparent indifference, carelessness, or even levity? Can you make no

allowance for disappointments, no excuse for self-reproach? can you not imagine too deep feelings sometimes cause apparent heartlessness? Society is life to many! What should I be without it? I have no relatives, no home except my chambers; fancy my evenings spent either there or at my club, should I not miss the kind voices and bright smiles of society? I sometimes delude myself that some do care for me, and bless society for such a sweetener of life. You cannot understand this, you cannot imagine what man is abandoned to himself, without any of the influences of home and peaceful happiness, summer without flowers, or night without the moon's pale light."

Marion's sweet face wore that almost bewildering expression of painful doubt, which I had noticed during dinner, as she listened to Mr. Murray's words, uttered in that low tone which is so entrancing. I could understand it now: he was bringing to her mind the springs of human life, stripping it of its mantle of spring-like hues, by speaking of its realities. He was a keen observer of character, and saw that descriptions of the new opera, or *on-dits* of the park would not interest Marion; he understood her feeling for the poetry and impulses of life;

he talked of sentiments and principles, and invested them with his own peculiar charms of conversation.

Marion went on playing in silence for a short time ; his eyes were fixed on her countenance. At last she turned and said, half sorrowfully :

“ Yes, I have often thought of this, and felt inclined to pity you all ; you must be so wretchedly lonely in those gloomy chambers, with no one to care for you, to sympathise with you in your struggles for success, or rejoice in your triumph ; but then you boast of your freedom from bonds, you seem to enjoy your independence, and to look with such compassion upon those who have any ties to home ; no, you cannot excite my pity for you or your friends, eloquent though you be in their behalf.”

I heard Marion’s low laugh follow this speech, and saw a slight shade of annoyance cloud Murray’s brow ; he was one of those men who expect implicit deference to their opinions, and the merest appearance of slight is a source of vexation.

Soon after this Marion left the piano. She was standing near me, playing with one of the little girls, all trace of thoughtfulness had vanished, and cheerful conversation and merry



laughter was all I heard. At last the children left the room, and I and Marion began talking: she knew I had lately returned from the continent, and began asking me about my travels.

“Did you go to Florence, Mr. Courtenay? Were you not enchanted with the galleries of pictures? And Rome too, and Venice! Do you know. I feel quite wild with desire to see Italy when I think of all the embodiments of the beautiful which are there!”

“Yes, I went to all these cities, remained for some time in them, and looked again and again at all that was interesting and lovely. You seem to have a taste for art—do you draw at all?”

“A little—just enough to make me long to do more—enough to enable me to feel the delights of painting; it is one of my brightest dreams, to hope that some day I may see the *chefs-d’œuvre* of Italian art. You will smile at my warmth; I am not generally so enthusiastic, I assure you.”

“Are you equally fond of music, Miss Harcourt? You must be partial to it, I am sure, from your singing; but do you appreciate it as much as painting?”

“Oh, no! I like music very much—in fact, I cannot understand any one disliking it, or even

being indifferent to it: how can they think of heaven without it? But I confess it does not give me equal pleasure to hear fine music, as to see a very beautiful picture, one rather excites me, but the other makes me think, calls up images of the past—something the same kind of distinction that seems to me to exist between the mouth and eyes, the former expresses the disposition and habitual temperament, while the eyes portray the feelings and change as rapidly as they do.”

“I think I understand you—you have expressed your meaning clearly, but the effect of the two arts is different upon diverse characters; I fancy people of very imaginative dispositions prefer music—they like to be excited and prefer it to reflection. Unless I am mistaken, you rather despise mere feeling!”

“Indeed, I do, I cannot have any sympathy with emotions which are mere impulse, which are violent perhaps, but not being founded on conviction are evanescent as the clouds.” Marion paused for a moment, and then added, with a half-bitter smile: “Do you know, I have been called cold-hearted, because I cannot understand giving way to mere feeling. I sympathise deeply with those who suffer, but then they

must silently strive against it; they must act, not sit down quietly and be carried away by the stream."

I looked at her glowing cheek, and felt she was not one of the weak ones of this world who would be crushed by the first sorrow. I wondered what grief would come to try her spirit, now ready to combat so heroically. I trembled lest it should be a blight on the affections, that is the heaviest trial this world has for the young and ardent. As she rose to follow her parents from the room, attended by Murray, I wondered if he would become "the ocean to the river of her thoughts." I did not fancy he had excited any interest with her at present, she was so calm as she conversed with him, and yet he appeared to be one who might gain an influence over such a character as Marion's.

He was evidently paying her that highest compliment a man can bestow, listening with interest to her conversation, and adapting his to her tastes; there was not an approach to flirtation between them, indeed I could not fancy Marion flirting, she seemed of too high and pure a nature for such an idea to cross her mind for one moment.

There seems to be a sad misconception of that

word, flirtation, among people—scarcely any one agrees in interpreting it. I have heard it applied to many a girl who has been laughing and talking in the mere exuberance of her spirits, utterly indifferent to the opinion of her partner—this is not flirtation. I have heard it applied to people who have been conversing upon subjects of far too high importance to have had one selfish thought intrude—this is not flirtation ; but how difficult it is to define what it is ! I once heard a very clever man describe it as “ making love without a definite object ;” this is a technical definition.

When I see a man devoting himself to a young girl, showing her, by every word and look, how very much her society charms him, indifferent to all else, and anxious to please her and her alone, yet knowing that he would shrink from giving her his real, true affections, knowing he would rather sacrifice anything than what he terms his liberty—I call *this* flirtation, and sigh over the desecration of the holiest feelings of a woman’s heart.

I scorn those men, who among themselves can boast of their “ narrow escapes,” of their “ past danger,” with this or that pretty girl, at such a ball, or during last season, or while on a

country visit, when they know that they have exerted every power to please, every energy to interest her, either from the vanity of wishing to be considered a favourite with a belle, or from indulging themselves in any passing fancy.

Nor do I feel less contempt for the woman, who can give her sweetest smile, and that cordial warmth of manner which should proceed from affection, to any one of her acquaintance, or be on equal terms with an old friend as with the partner of one valse.

When Mr. Murray returned to the drawing-room, he joined the conversation Mrs. Colston and I were pursuing. She inquired of him :

“Do you know when Arthur Stanley is coming to town?”

“After the circuit is over. I heard from him yesterday. He seems very busy : lucky fellow ! he is getting on wonderfully. Do you know him, Mr. Courtenay?”

“Is he one of the Stanleys of Langston?”

“Yes, his father lives there ; he is the only son.”

“I believe I had a slight acquaintance with the old gentleman in years gone by, but I do not know his son.”

“He is a favourite of mine,” said Mrs. Colston,

“he is so noble in his feelings. We do not quite agree always, he is too exacting in his requirements ; and too little compassionate for people’s failings, he is very clear-sighted, and can penetrate motives better than most men, which makes his observations sometimes appear rather harsh.”

“I assure you he is a capital fellow, and very clever : he gained all the University honours, and is now rising rapidly at the bar. He has the most unshrinking perseverance, the most untiring energy, and conquers every difficulty.”

“He certainly has a warm advocate in you, Mr. Murray. Of course you are very intimate?”

“Very, we meet nearly every day, either in court, or at the club.”

“Will he be in town for the Brandons’ ball? they will be sadly disappointed if he is not, for he is rather a favourite there.”

“That is a fortnight hence—oh, yes! he is sure to go there ; and he is anxious to meet Miss Harcourt, and he knows she is expected.”

“I suppose her sister Adeline will then make her *début*. You know her, Mr. Murray; is she not pretty?”

“I scarcely think pretty is the right epithet—she has such an intellectual countenance, such expressive eyes, and is altogether such a striking

looking girl, that pretty is too everyday a term. Hers is a face for a painter, and would be a good ideal for a Corinne, or a Medora ; those dreamy, mysterious eyes, curtained with those long dark lashes, that broad, clear brow, and the proud curve of her lips arrest one's attention directly. I did not know she was to make her appearance so soon. I expect she will make a great sensation. I hope they will dress her becomingly, she requires peculiar taste in that department."

"What particular attention you pay to ladies' dress, Mr. Murray," said Mrs. Colston. "You would be a treasure to a milliner to assist her inventive genius ; however, I do not think you need be afraid about Adeline's appearance, for besides her own exquisite taste, Marion's painter's eye will adapt all to her sister's style."

Mr. Murray rose to take leave, and soon after I departed ; we had remained later than is quite customary, but I know nothing more pleasant than chatting with old friends in the evening : one always feels more sociably inclined by candle-light than in the daytime, unless, indeed, it be during a walk. It always appears to me that there is something in exercise in the open air which disposes us to express our feelings more freely to each other, which

dissipates that reserve which seems so natural to us ; whether it is the influence of external nature which makes us less conventional, or what the cause is, I know not, but I have often remarked the effect.

Of all the chilling heart-collapsing events, I think a morning call in a London drawing-room is the worst : two or three ladies, all looking determined to be fascinating, their eyes turned on the unfortunate man who finds himself within their precincts, the difficulty of a well-sustained general conversation, the danger of touching on unwelcome topics, all combine to the general restraint ; and if perchance a well-timed laugh, or a happy remark, have made the party feel more at ease, more sociable with each other, then the caller rises, and after apologizing for his "visitation," takes his leave, either congratulating himself upon having performed such a meritorious act of duty, or out of humour because he could not have a comfortable chat with his favourite in the family.

I do not mean to say that this is a fair specimen of every morning call, but I know most people will agree that it is of very many. There are some gifted individuals who can take amusement with them everywhere, who can elicit a



smile from the most formal lips, and make sunshine even in a fog ; hail to their genial influence ! People are apt to fancy that their country friends are exempt from these little annoyances, but they forget that if the visits are less frequent, when they are paid they are generally longer, for horses must be rested, and luncheons must be eaten.

Really all intercourse in London is in the evening ; all meet then, for except in the highest circles of society, the gentlemen are all professionally engaged in the day, and are not free until the dinner hour, after which they are glad to enter into society as a recreation ; it is a great evil that such late hours are thus introduced, but it is an almost cureless custom. Everything is on such a whirl now, there is so much excitement compressed into each day, that there is not time for it all : part gets pushed into the next, there is no quiet, no tranquillity in the life of one who enters into London society, for there is no moderation. Is not this a false mode of passing through life ? a sad waste of the energies of a rational and immortal being ?

Anything which contributes to the real happiness of people, young or old, anything which raises the feelings, or strengthens the powers,

should be encouraged; but this craving for excitement, this restless love of change, is a great evil, the predominant one of the age. Everything must be done by steam now, there must be no pause, no lingering to admire, onwards, onwards is the ruling impulse; a fretful importunity, a restless anxiety is engendered, all is for the piquant, the striking picture, nothing for the calm and peaceful image. But perhaps an old man may be inclined to look back with regret to the past, and forget all the rich promise which appears in the rising generation.

For with all its faults there is much to admire, much on which to ground fair hopes for the future. A love for the beautiful, a tender veneration for the past, is springing up in many of the young and ardent now, which tends to soften the rugged struggles for the *matériel*. There is no fear that it will degenerate into weakly, mystical sentimentality, there is "sterner stuff" abroad than that; but it is to be hoped that it will temper the too harsh strife which is waging for the necessities of life, which are too apt to harden all the higher and nobler elements in man's nature, to depress the spiritual faculties of his being; against this

petrifying power should be brought all that brightens, all that softens his existence, and let their purifying influences rest upon him to prevent his becoming wedded to earth and its engrossing cares, to remind him of his real capabilities, high responsibilities, and future destiny.

## CHAPTER II.

What is fame to a heart yearning for affection, and finding it not? Is it not as a triumphal crown to the brow of one parched with fever, and asking for one fresh healthful draught, the cup of cold water?

FELICIA HEMANS.

THERE was great excitement in the assize town of Shirley, about a trial which was expected to come on at once. Eager crowds of people were thronging near the Town-hall, which was filled with spectators; ladies were in every available place, strangely contrasting in their bright attire, with the sombre robes of the barristers, and the gloomy interior of the court. It always appears wonderful how women, with all their sensitiveness, all their tenderness, can ever enter a court of justice: how, for the mere pleasure of indulging their morbid love for the

terrible, or revolting side of nature, they can listen to the details of crime, and gaze on the brutalized indifference, or the agonized anxiety of a fellow-creature.

I have no share in that false pity for the guilty which is common in this age, for the compassion and interest which is showered upon the convict, while the honest, labouring, and suffering man, is neglected; as long as crime exists, there should be punishment, stern, retributive justice; but I cannot approve of women witnessing such scenes, and hardening their hearts by such spectacles.

The trial which was causing so much interest in Shirley was for murder; a poor old man had been brutally murdered on his return from the market-town by a notorious poacher. The witnesses were examined who had watched the deceased leave the town; one was called who asserted that the prisoner had been seen in his company, and then the description of the discovery of the body in a lonely field was given; a knife which had belonged to the old man was found in the prisoner's possession; the whole chain of evidence was complete.

The counsel for the prosecution was to address the jury, when a murmur was heard in the

court: the leading barrister was suddenly taken ill. A gleam of satisfaction glanced over the prisoner's countenance. However, the junior counsel rose, and in the absence of his leader, begged to address the court. In a rich, deep voice he began to speak; his earnest words were heard in the farthest corner of the court; in a masterly speech he summed up the evidence, clearly proved to all present that none but the prisoner could be the guilty person. All present felt the force of that appeal for justice; its resistless power might be traced in the firm countenance of the judge, in the blank, despairing look of the prisoner, and in the breathless silence of the whole court.

The defence was made, but it was a useless speech, for after only a few moments' deliberation the jury returned, and pronounced the verdict—Guilty! A solemn pause followed; then the judge put on his black cap—the significant emblem of the stern award of justice. His voice sounded in solemn accents as he spoke the fearful sentence of death, and added a few words on repentance and eternity to the condemned man.

Guilt and misery, those great mysteries of life, threading their dark chain through that

desponding prisoner's course. Who shall lift the curtain, and trace the wild, conflicting emotions in his breast? should we witness the passionate desire for life, the fierce longing for revenge, the cold, appalling agony of despair? or see these dark feelings soothed by a better spirit, and his last hours calmed, not by the triumphant certainty, sometimes talked of as having been felt by a convicted criminal, but by an humble hope of forgiveness, founded on a deep sense of repentance.

The barrister who had so ably supplied his leader's place in this important trial, was Arthur Stanley: he had fully realized the opinions of his friends in thus distinguishing himself when an opportunity offered itself. He met with many a friendly word and congratulation as he left the court, for he was a general favourite. Yet he could not avoid feeling serious at the thought of a man's life being curtailed through his instrumentality, although his reason was perfectly convinced of the justice and truth of the sentence.

This struggle between feeling and judgment, is the great cause of the perplexing difficulties of this world—it is so much easier to be guided by impulse rather than principle, it is so difficult to calm the throbbing heart, and listen to the cooler

dictates of the brain ; those are the few really noble ones who can do this, who with strong, tender feelings, can combine the iron will, who, having warm affections, can yet hold them in subjection, while the intellect and the judgment exercise their sway ; of such a mould was Martin Luther, that glory of humanity !

The man of cold heart may succeed in his plans, may stand high on the pinnacle of eminence, but he will never obtain an enduring influence over the minds of men ; he is one-sided, like the ocean in its power, but without its magic sound.

Arthur Stanley was keenly susceptible, but concealed it beneath an exterior resembling ironical indifference. His lips often wore a smile, but it was not one of satisfaction, but of almost mocking incredulity. He had an invincible repugnance to "humbug" of any sort, and always seemed to dread it and suspect it in most people. He fancied almost all women practised it, and was noted among his acquaintance for his observations on the petty manœuvres of society.

Feeling how deeply he could value a character such as his dreamy fancies portrayed, he shrunk from even a transient regard for any not worthy of his affection, and appeared endued with almost



a double vision in dissecting young ladies' dispositions. Perhaps from his position as an only son, with good prospects, and with talents which alone might distinguish him, he was jealous of the attentions showered upon him ; he was one of those who are carressed by all, and are courted by families anxious for such desirable connections.

He was going for a very few days to his father's place, Langston, before returning to town. The spring was just bursting into life and beauty as Arthur rode through the park. The young leaves were in their freshest green, the daisies and cowslips enlivened the meadows, and the breezes full of that elastic buoyancy so delightful at that season, so expressive of hope and renovated youth. Arthur rode into the stable-yard, and dismounted there. He found his father had not yet returned from his drive.

He strolled round the flower-garden, where the air was perfumed with the sweet breath of the hyacinths and violets, and all those graceful children of the early spring which come to gladden us with their flush of loveliness after the stern dreariness of winter, and to teach us pure lessons of love and peace, with their mild, gentle influence. Flowers, how beautiful ye are ! growing in every place, evidences of the presiding

spirit of loveliness ! ye of the rich glowing dyes, the gorgeously crimsoned and golden children of the tropics, springing up to meet the sun and fading when he turns away, emblems of the passionate and ardent natures ; and ye, delicately tinted blossoms, looking up mildly with your starry eyes, or hanging your waxen bells among the dreamy foliage, images of those gentle loving ones who exist but to love, and when their dear hopes are taken away, have nothing more to live for, and bend their heads to the pitiless storm to wither and die, ye have been called “the footsteps of the angels,” and are, like theirs, imprinted on the mountain’s side, by the murmuring stream, in the shadowy forest, in the palace grounds, and in the poor man’s garden. In the poetical traditions of the Germans there is a beautiful idea, “that where flowers bloom, the angels are.”

As the sun sank lower in the western sky, Arthur wandered into a wood near the house, his favourite haunt. The tangled grass and long brambles were growing over the little paths, the pale primrose covered the banks, the thrush poured forth his wonderful notes from the lofty fir-tree, as if the very spirit of melody were imprisoned in his warbling throat, and were gushing out in the trills and cadences of his song ;

the rooks' hoarse cawing sounded from the elm-trees, and the finches' shrill twitter came from the underwood. Nothing but these voices of field and forest were heard: calm and peaceful influences were poured on our hero's mind.

It was one of those hours when a man seems to forget circumstances and local advantages, to meet his own identity, and, as it were, to speak with the genius of his life. It is to be regretted that men do this so seldom, how much fewer then would be our mistakes; we go on, borne away by the rushing eddies of the world, and but too frequently never pause in our course until we step on some quicksand, or are hurled against some rock, and find too late that we have mistaken our means of happiness, and must finish our pilgrimage with a bleeding, wounded heart.

"Why do I feel thus restless? whence comes this void in my breast? why do I feel a blank in my moments of success, why an unutterable loneliness and sadness? in my calmer, quieter hours? I cannot deny that it is so to myself, though I appear to my companions to need no sympathy, though I so often assert man's power of supplying himself with sufficient companionship! Have I not in my inmost thoughts an image treasured up which would harmonize this

discord, could I only find a living likeness? They think me ambitious, proud, indifferent, and nothing more! little do they understand the impulse of my heart.

“Edward Murray is the only one who at all comprehends me, yet even he can but faintly guess how ardently I could love, how longingly I aspire to domestic happiness, how gentle images of home, of a loving wife, of darling cherub children, haunt me; how precious such treasures would be to me! Little do the votaries of fashion I nightly see crowding the opera or ball-room know how earnestly I have watched them, how anxiously hoped that I might find some kindred spirit, and how miserably I have found them wanting.

“For feeling as I do, looking to affection as the greatest blessing of life, how tremblingly I shrink from yielding to its syren smile, unless I felt I should lean upon no broken reed. What bliss to *know* in unfailing certainty, that I was loved, deeply loved, as only woman can love, loved for myself alone, through life, and through eternity!

“Must it never be? have I drawn too pure an image, raised too high a standard in my heart? Is my taste too fastidious? No, never let me think this, I will seek again for such

happiness, but these feelings must be banished, they must not come across me in the hours of mental work, when the intellect must be kept free from such enthralling ties."

Musing thus, Arthur Stanley emerged from the shadows of the wood and found himself on the outskirts of a common, just as the sun was sinking in a sea of glory, where the golden islands of light were flooded by his parting rays, and all the magic of cloud-land flushed with radiant light. Hastily he turned towards Langston, for that sky warned him that it was getting late; and changing his sauntering pace to a brisk walk, he hurried across the fields to his home.

Mr. Stanley was expecting his son. He had heard from a neighbour of the brilliant speech he had made at Shirley, and it was with pride as well as affection that he greeted him. After exchanging a few words with Mr. Stanley, Arthur went to his room to make a slight change in his dress, for he knew his father liked such marks of etiquette to be preserved. And the old gentleman was right—freedom from all such forms of respect to ourselves and our friends denotes a reckless tone of mind, and is but too common in these days, and is produced in a great degree by the almost universal prac-

tice of men herding together in clubs, where, of course, perfect independence and ease is the ruling fashion.

Arthur felt refreshed by doffing his dusty shooting-coat, and more inclined to enter the dining-room, than if he had sat down in his lounging morning dress.

A cheerful fire blazed, for the spring was not yet so far advanced but that the evenings felt chilly ; dark crimson curtains hung in thick, rich folds, and gave a warm comfortable look to the room where Mr. Stanley and his son were seated. It was a beautiful picture, for Mr. Stanley was a *beau-idéal* of an English gentleman. His noble forehead just shaded by his silvery hair, fine manly features with a few lines traced by Time's iron finger, his blue eyes still bright with vivacity, and what gave such character to his countenance, his heavy eyebrows, which, in strong contrast to his hair, still retained the raven hue ; his tall figure slightly bowed by approaching infirmities, for he was nearly seventy, all combined to make his appearance most striking. He leant back in his chair, listening to Arthur's conversation as he related all that was passing, and described many of his acquaintance, dissecting their characters with no gentle hand.

To see Arthur now as he bent forward towards his father, with his dark eye calm and serene, his lip wearing its usual mocking smile, few would recognise the earnest, ardent man with feelings of most intense susceptibility, with all the passionate aspirations for the beautiful which agitated him during his walk through the coppice ; for now he had banished his inner self. All those gentle, tender feelings he loved to dwell on when alone. He had returned to the outer world, to its matter-of-fact ideas, to its cold judgments.

They discussed his professional prospects, and the state of the political world.

“Merit, my dear father, is of no consequence in these days. A friend at court, and an unblushing confidence are the best assistants.”

“It is astonishing how people do rise in these days, with apparently no right nor reason ; but the enormous fortunes some of the manufacturers and mercantile classes make is the most surprising. Denison who has bought Fountain Court, not twenty miles from here, is said to be worth two or three hundred thousand pounds, yet when he began life he had really not a shilling in his possession. His sons consider themselves fast men, and are in cavalry regiments.”

"Yes, and the real old owners of the soil are losing their incomes year after year, and seeing their property go into the hands of the money-coiners. How goes on the bank at Rivington? I hope they have not bored you any more about it."

"Well, they asked me so often to become a director, just to put my name on the lists, that at last I consented; so I am now a bank director, Arthur."

"I am very sorry to hear it. I wish you had mentioned your intention to me before you made any promise, you little know to what liabilities men are exposed by becoming these kind of sleeping partners in such concerns."

"Nonsense, my boy, do not let your legal knowledge make you suspicious. What harm can happen from my allowing old Ford to put my name in his books as director? they are as safe as the Bank of England."

"I know less than nothing of Mr. Ford. I only speak on general grounds, and I am sure that I am right; however, I hope you, my dear, unsuspecting father, will have no reason to regret your ignorance of such transactions."

"Mr. Ford has been a good neighbour, and I did not like to refuse him a trifling favour for which he seemed so anxious; so do not



look so grave, Arthur, for after all it is nothing."

It was no part of Arthur's habits to make himself anxious when it was useless. He knew enough of his father's character, to feel sure he would not take any precautionary measures, he must have full certainty before he would act, therefore he merely said, with a smile :

" You have only made yourself responsible, I suppose, for some thirty or forty thousand pounds ; however, it may be all right, I hope it will. I shall just take a turn round the garden, and smoke a cigar before they bring us coffee ; it is such a lovely night. I cannot resist the temptation of a stroll."

As Arthur sauntered round the garden, he thought with regret of the step his father had taken with regard to the bank ; however, the soft evening air, and the soothing influence of his Havannah, which calms all irritation, soon restored him to his usual equanimity, and it was with a smile that he entered the library. As he had determined to return to town the next day, he remained talking till late, and then went to his room.

The unpleasant ideas which were connected with Mr. Stanley's interest in the Rivington Bank, recurred to Arthur before he slept. Like

some vision, indistinct in its outline, but fearful from its dimness, he tried to banish them from his mind, but he could not for some time ; at last sleep released him from his anxieties. It was late the following morning before he awoke, and he was compelled to make unusual speed to avoid missing the train by which he intended reaching London.

After he had passed through the park, he crossed the common and enjoyed a gallop over the turf. Nothing produces such an exhilarating effect upon the spirits as a hard gallop on a good horse in the early freshness of a spring morning ; one then enjoys the blessing of pure animal life, the simple appreciation of existence.

By rapid riding Arthur just arrived at the station in time, and directing his servant to take his horse quietly home, he settled himself in the carriage, and was soon being whizzed to town. No conversation was exchanged between him and the three gentlemen who occupied the carriage, for the "silent system" seems universally adopted on the road. Even a passing remark is generally received as an intruder, and the bold individual who hazards it, seldom receives more than a monosyllable as a reply.

Arthur had some business to transact for his father in the city, therefore he turned his steps there. As he passed through the noisy Strand, crowded with vehicles and busy with numerous passengers, he felt all those calm, bright feelings, which were inspired by the peaceful loveliness of the country, quickly evaporating, and love of excitement, and feverish anxiety for action taking possession of him.

Not that country life is of necessity, the best calculated for the development of man's highest powers, the reflections which a thoughtful man would make in traversing the thoroughfares of London, teeming with humanity, the various destinies of the inhabitants; the knowledge of the eager struggles for existence, the bitter disappointment, all the passions, all the sorrows of mortality, which he knows are beating and throbbing around him, are more likely to rouse him into action, to teach him the discipline of life, to strengthen him for its struggles, than the delightful dreaminess, the peaceful monotony, which a country life produces.

But, lest the soul forget her high vocation, let all men gaze on the face of Nature, let them drink in her sweet influences, refresh themselves with her sweet sounds, let them keep up the love of the Beautiful, which is implanted

in their hearts, and then there is no fear that the arduous labour in their respective callings, which is imperative in London or in any large community where there is much competition, will harden their feelings or obliterate their sympathies.

After Arthur had finished his business he went to his chambers in the Temple, and notwithstanding the dinginess of its narrow courts and the gloom of its buildings, he felt a species of satisfaction in returning to them. Life in chambers reminded him forcibly of his college days ; he had plenty of acquaintance near him, and some friends, who, mixing in the same society and engaging in the same scenes and contests, could sympathize together. They had plenty of agreeable evenings ; when returning from evening-parties, they met in each other's rooms and discussed their partners, their dinners, and the next morning's trial or judgment in animated terms, while they enjoyed their cigars and pale ale.

Arthur just looked at his papers, and then went to his club to dine. There he found several letters awaiting him ; invitations for dinners, for balls, for friendly musical evenings, and formal "at homes," which is another name for such a

crowd, which, if assembled outside instead of inside a house, would invariably attract attention from the police, and cause them to advise the component members to "move on."

After answering these pressing notes in the required terms of regret, delight and politeness which their respective contents merited, Stanley went into the drawing-room, and there found Murray. The young men dined together, and in talking over the various events which had occurred since they parted, the time rapidly passed. They went up in the billiard-room to smoke, and there found several acquaintance : they formed a jovial party, and did not separate until late.

Stanley and Murray walked back to the Temple together. When they parted, Murray said :

"Of course you go to the Brandons' ball to-morrow? it is to be rather a grand affair ; several of our men are going—*àpropos*, the Harcourts will be there, the people I have often talked to you about ; the youngest daughter is to make her *début*—and I can tell you she is an uncommonly handsome girl ; but I know her sister Marion the best."

"I believe I shall go ; however, I expect to

be disappointed with these favourites of yours ; you know how often you have raised my hopes by your descriptions. What time shall you go ? Will you call for me ?”

“With pleasure ; I suppose about half-past ten will be near the mark. I do not want to be late, as I rather wish to see Adeline Harcourt’s *entrée*, so don’t keep me waiting, there’s a good fellow.”

## CHAPTER III.

And still I looked upon their loveliness,  
And sought through nature for similitudes  
Of perfect beauty, innocence, and bliss,  
And fairest imagery around me thronged.

POLLOCK.

ALTHOUGH I am not fond of crowded rooms, Mrs. Colston prevailed upon me to accompany her to Mrs. Brandon's ball. As I had been abroad for some years, a little curiosity prevented my feeling any great reluctance.

There was a profusion of flowers in the dancing-room, which was blazing with light ; inspiring strains of music were heard, and all seemed animated as we entered. I stationed myself near the door, for there it was rather cooler, and it amused me to see the company enter. After some little time had elapsed, I heard the name of Harcourt announced. Mrs.

Harcourt appeared with her two daughters. Although, from Murray's description of Adeline, I had expected to see a striking-looking girl, I was surprised at her extreme loveliness. She was standing in the doorway, which cast a slight shadow over her, giving a gentle hue to her beauty.

I thought even Murray's fastidious taste would be gratified by her appearance. Ignorant as I am of the details of ladies' dress, Adeline's toilette struck me immediately ; her white dress hung gracefully to the ground, its flowing drapery unspoiled by any flouncing or trimming, her dark hair was braided close to her face, with a massive plait bound round her beautifully formed head, and a large crimson flower of the tropics placed on one side, another similar one just raising the folds of her dress ; her beautiful arms were encircled by rubies ; nothing could be in better taste, or harmonize better with the clear paleness of her complexion, which had not the languor of ill health, for her curved lip was of the brightest scarlet.

She moved through the crowd with a graceful step, apparently unconscious of the admiring glances bent upon her. She was soon whirling in the giddy valse, in which she excelled, and her fine figure appeared to great advantage.



Marion came and talked to me, anxious to hear my opinion of her sister ; she looked gentleness and purity itself in her pale blue dress, and her flowing hair without the addition of a single ornament. She was soon led away to join the quadrille which was then forming ; she stood next to Adeline at the top of the room, and I gazed on them both with pleasure. I soon heard Murray's voice near me.

"I see the Harcourts, Stanley ; how lovely Adeline is looking. I suppose she is engaged for half a dozen dances already. Confound you, keeping me while you finished your book. I wish we had come earlier."

"I can guess which is Adeline : that tall girl with the Oriental eyes and brow ; she is handsome, just the thing for a studio ; but I can't fancy her pouring out one's tea on a winter's evening, she is on too magnificent a scale for every-day life. Who is that fair girl in blue ? she looks the sort of thing one would like for a cousin."

"That is Marion Harcourt ; you must let me introduce you. She dances well, and what is more amuses one ; I like a quadrille with her. Will you come after this one is over ?"

"No, I will wait ; I like to watch people a little before I commit myself by an introduction ;

you will scarcely content yourself with a quadrille with Adeline, the valse will suit you better, and she will prefer it also, unless I am mistaken in her looks?"

"You are about right, a quadrille is heavy work with most people; I shall certainly try to get something better from her."

The dance was now over, and as the Harcourts passed round, they bowed to Murray. Stanley said:

"There is always character in a bow; just notice the difference in the manners of those girls in saluting you! I rather like the bright smile Miss Harcourt gave you, though the earnest look and half-graceful, half-haughty bend of her sister was very effective."

Murray was soon by Adeline's side, but he had to wait several dances before she was disengaged; meantime he sat down and talked to Marion, who did not appear very constantly in the whirling circle: she seemed to know many present, and they all went to chat with her. Stanley stood by the folding doors in apparent indifference, but his dark inquiring eyes followed her as she moved about, and a look of interest at last crossed his face, as he saw her conversing with Murray at the end of the room.

Marion soon discovered Murray's friend, of

whom she had heard so much; and as she glanced occasionally at him, she could not avoid catching his eye. After some time, when she was sitting near me, Murray brought Stanley, and introduced him to her; the colour was slightly heightened on her cheek as she bowed in acquiescence to his request for the next polka. The music soon commenced, and she rose to accompany him to the dancing-room.

It causes a strange feeling when people who have heard much of each other, at last meet and interchange ideas; there is always a wonder whether the image the mind has formed will be confirmed by the reality, whether pleasure or disappointment will be the result of the meeting. I saw Stanley's mocking smile fade into a more agreeable expression as he conversed with Marion; she was looking bright, though the same serious glance I had before observed sometimes flitted over her face. After the dance was over, they seated themselves on a quiet sofa, apparently mutually pleased with each other.

"How did you like 'Les Huguenots' the other night?" asked Stanley.

"Extremely—more than I can tell you. I have but one fault to find—it was too exciting."

"Nonsense! you do not mean to say you found an opera too exciting! I wish I were

you, it must be such a pleasure to feel that sensation. I can scarcely believe you."

"Indeed I was very much excited; the music is certainly not of the soothing style; then the plot is interesting; but above all the impassioned singing and acting of Grisi and Mario made me feel most enthusiastic. But then I go very seldom to the opera, therefore of course it has a far more powerful effect on me than on those who, like you, I suppose, go there constantly."

"You are mistaken; I do not very often go either to the opera or theatres—I hate the heat and fuss; and then one is sure to meet numbers of people one knows, and cares nothing about, which is a terrible bore. I am afraid I am not very fond of music, at least, not of what is generally called good music. I like to hear a ballad sung in a drawing-room, in what I call a comfortable way; but the wonderful cadences and inimitable variations of the primas donnas rather wearies than pleases me—they bring associations to me of heat, crowds, full-dress, and vanity, instead of real poetry and sentiment. I am sure you understand me."

"I confess I have sometimes felt the same thing, but I should be considered quite *bizarre*

if I made such a remark ! “ The great fault of society is, that every one endeavours to form themselves on one standard, one set of opinions appears the received one ; there is no originality, no individuality ; not only are the angles of each character rounded off, but a kind of universal pattern is stamped upon all, just as one ruling fashion is found in our dress ; this seems to me a pity.”

“ I quite agree with you ; but when we do meet with any one untouched by this transmuting power, how pleasantly they influence us—what a refreshing effect an hour of their society produces ! I complain of the complete want of harmony there is ; those who have a sweet but weak voice will sing *bravours* songs, because they have heard some one else do so ; short people will wear the same dress as the tall, because they happen to have admired it—no one dares to think for themselves.”

“ As you have touched upon dress, does it not strike you that the toilettes to-night are particularly unbecoming ? I dislike the immense wreaths with long trailing flowers, which are so fashionable.”

“ They are frightful. Just look at that tall girl in pink near the door, the one who is

decidedly *passée* ; those creepers droop around her as if she were a maypole, and not sufficiently attractive for them to cling to."

"How severe ! but that is not a bad idea. If that speech were published, I think few would venture to wear such chaplets."

"Your sister is exquisitely dressed; those deep red flowers relieve her dress, and harmonize with her luxuriant beauty ; one fancies her to have come from their radiant climate ; and then that plait has almost the effect of a coronet upon her open brow."

"I am glad you like her dress. I prevailed upon mamma to allow me to select it for her first ball, and I am very well satisfied with the result. Adeline always lets me manage these little affairs for her, she does not care about them."

"No, I should think she was too proud to be vain ; look at her now, talking to Murray and Bernard—they both evidently admire her. Do you know, Miss Harcourt, your sister will be a coquette, if she be not one already."

"Oh, no ! do not say so, Mr. Stanley. I hope Adeline has too much good feeling for that character, she will not be so heartless."

"I do not think I shall be mistaken ; there is only one thing which will preserve her from

the certainty of it, a true and earnest attachment to some good fellow, otherwise with such powers of attraction and fascination nothing can save her. But do not look so sad—have you such a horror of a flirt?”

“Indeed I have. Now do not smile; do you laugh at everything?—are you never serious?”

“What a question! Of course I am very often, but not generally in a ball-room, there is too much of the ridiculous there to feel grave. Perhaps you look on the real side of things, I generally seize all the amusement I can, especially from the weaknesses of my acquaintance.”

Mrs. Colston happened to pass me some time after this, and wishing for some refreshment, I accompanied her down stairs; there we found Murray and Adeline; he was paying her most undivided attention, bending his most expressive eyes on her with a look of interest and almost tenderness; her wonderfully beautiful eyelids were cast down, and her long, dark lashes nearly rested on her cheek: sometimes she raised them, and her eyes seemed to speak from their mysterious, dreamy depths.

They soon left the supper-room, and when I again saw them, they were valseing. Adeline looked like the swan, as she glided round in her majestic gracefulness; the exercise had brought

a faint colour to her cheek; and when at last she paused and leant on Murray's arm, many were the admiring glances cast on her as she stood there, flushed with youth and beauty, gently waving her Indian fan.

Some one whom I did not know was now talking to Marion, and she at last joined the dance with him. Stanley took up his old position by the folding-doors, and was soon surrounded by some acquaintance who were criticising the people. One began :

"Is not Murray in luck to-night, Stanley? Look how he is coming it with that pretty Miss Harcourt; and to judge from her looks, she is by no means displeased with her partner; they look particularly well together."

"Trust Murray for that," answered Stanley; "he never risks his reputation for dancing by performing with a *gauche valseuse*; she is certainly very lovely. Murray is decidedly gone about her; well, I should not be sorry to see him really in love, he has had so many fancies in his time; but he always likes to usurp the belle of the room, particularly if she happen to be a *débutante*, that he may write his impression on the title-page of her ball-room experiences."

"You have been lazy to-night, Stanley; I



have scarcely seen you dance at all ; one of your philosophical fits, I suppose ?”

“ Oh !” answered another young man, “ he has been amusing himself in a quieter way ; I saw him talking in a back drawing-room with a nice-looking girl for a long time. There she is, with the long curls, dancing with Warrenne. Who is she ?”

Stanley quietly turned round and spoke to a lady, disengaging himself from this group of men at the door, who were discussing the relative merits of the young ladies in not very elegant terms ; one being denominated as a high-stepper with good action, another recommended as possessing a fortune, and a third for having plenty of chaff.

Little do young ladies know to what a searching ordeal their appearances and qualifications are subjected by that knot of men which is always assembled round the door, nor what severe remarks are made upon every look and movement ; little do they imagine that those who have given the most encouraging smiles, or have led them on most eagerly in any sarcastic animadversions, are the first to blame them for it.

Few things more disgust a man of good taste

and feeling, than to hear the name of any lady whom he really admires made the subject of promiscuous observations from his acquaintance. Stanley need not have left the gossiping group so abruptly; he would not have heard any slighting or disparaging remark made upon Marion, for she was too gentle and too quiet in her style to be much noticed by strangers in a ball-room. It is requisite for a reigning belle to be either supremely beautiful, or, what far more frequently gives the palm in public estimation, to possess a certain sprightly, fascinating, winning manner, with a ready flow of conversation, a quickness of observation, and a merry laugh; these will make their possessor a general favourite.

Some of the guests were now taking their departure. How wearied and used-up many of the ladies looked, after having wasted their animation and thoughts upon people who were too often utterly indifferent. Their gay dresses, their wreathing flowers, contrasted sadly with their faded features.

Mrs. Colston, Mrs. Harcourt and I were chatting comfortably together, till at last we thought it time to seek the young ladies, to remind them of home. We soon found them. Murray conducted Adeline down stairs, and as

we passed the door, Stanley, without a word, offered his arm to Marion, and we all went for our wraps, seeking for them among the numerous heaps about us.

As Marion leant by the mantel-piece, wrapped in her shawl, I could not help looking at her. She appeared as fresh and pretty as when she came in, perhaps her hair drooped rather more carelessly, from dancing, but otherwise she looked as calm as ever. Adeline seemed rather excited and wearied, but she had been the *belle*, and had danced almost incessantly. The stars were shining brightly as we left the house.

“How beautifully clear it is,” said Marion, “what a delightful change from that hot room.”

“Have you suffered from the heat? I have had a most agreeable evening, and forgot the atmosphere, but this fresh night-breeze is pleasant. I wish this were a garden, I do so enjoy a walk in the country by starlight. Now the carriage is ready, Miss Harcourt—good-night.”

Stanley assisted Marion in, and, touching her hand as he did so, bade her adieu.

He and Murray returned to the hall, to light their cigars, and then walked together towards the Temple.

“Well, are you disappointed with the Har-

courts ? did I give you a correct description of them ?”

“ It was more so than usual : they appear very pleasant people ; the youngest seems to have made an impression upon your not *very* adamantine heart. Has she touched the feelings, or the imagination ? I know you refine very much on these things ; you study human nature, but I do not think you can quite satisfactorily account for the vagaries of your own being.”

“ I certainly should find a difficulty in answering that question, because I have not analyzed my sensations. She is certainly very lovely and fascinating, I *feel* this, and I *imagine* she is very amiable and charming, but I can tell you nothing more. She is very amusing : you would scarcely believe from seeing her in society so proud and Juno-like, that I have seen her at home perfectly wild with glee and mirth.”

“ I had a suspicion that she could be very different, from a most malicious smile she gave Barnard. I have no taste for women like her : she should be framed and glazed, and then I could gaze on her with pleasure, as at a picture ; but I like a woman with a more loveable look, something a little less like a statue.”

“ Stanley ! you are dreaming. Adeline Harcourt a statue ! with those earnest, expressive

eyes, which speak as eloquently as words ! you cannot have noticed her. Did you dance with her ?”

“ Not I. She was too much for me ; besides she seemed your particular prize. I should be sorry to interfere with you, Murray, though you are not always so considerate for me.”

“ Miss Harcourt looked well to-night ; how very different she is to her sister, she appears as if nothing could ruffle or disturb her. I saw you talking to her : how did you get on ?”

“ Famously ; we were soon quite old friends ; discussing mutual acquaintance is an admirable method of breaking through the formal barrier which a recent introduction erects. I like her style extremely, so quiet, and yet so animated ; her feelings are quick enough I am sure, but there is just sufficient reserve to keep them in back-ground ; the calmness you speak of is not from indifference, that flushing colour which comes and goes so rapidly, tells a very different tale to apathy.”

“ Indeed it does, it might make a vain fellow draw very incorrect conclusions in his own favour, if he did not watch her. I have known her family for some time, but I do not believe Marion has ever had even a passing feeling for any one ; many have paid her attention, but her

manners are so cordially kind, so perfectly self-possessed to all, that as far as I have observed, she has seen no one for whom she really cares."

"All the better luck for him who wins her: it is so rare to find a woman with such fresh, pure feelings, for most of them seem to me to be quite prepared to give a large portion of their regard to almost any one who shows them the slightest attention; they change the heroes of their day-dreams, nearly as often as their bonnets; are ready to be the gayest of the gay, or the self-denying ascetic, according to the profession or disposition of their last admirer, so that every one has the pleasant sensation of knowing that he is not by any means the first person who has touched their feelings or inspired their imagination."

"That is very true, Stanley. I see you have not been a leading card in the matrimonial market for nothing, you have gained some experience in the women; but it has spoilt you, you are too suspicious of them, you always fancy they have some motive which they would be better without; you never will cultivate their acquaintance at home, you meet them at balls and parties, and form your opinions from what you see of them there; this is not fair. You make no allowances for those feelings which

might naturally influence a pretty girl in society, such as gratified vanity, but immediately dot them down in the tablets of your memory as unsatisfactory specimens of the sex; one would really think you were afraid of the influence which a home-scene might have upon your freedom."

"Perhaps you are right, yet you must own, Murray, that I am not wrong in the main; of course there are exceptions to the almost universal taint of worldliness and vanity, but they are few. Here we are at the old Temple again. How still everything is. Will you come in and try some ale?"

"No, thank you, not to-night. I must be in court early to-morrow, and if I get into your rooms I know I should be booked for an hour or two. I must call on the Harcourts in a few days. Will you go with me? you may just as well know them."

"Very well; but I shall see you again before you go. I'll think of it. Good-night."

Murray returned the parting salutation and departed, leaving Stanley to muse over the past evening. He looked round his room, and could not help thinking how lonely it felt; then his fancy flew back to a bright smile and gentle voice, which had poured a gentle influence upon

him ; but his old doubts and misgivings crept over him, as he thought of the high standard his mind had drawn, and that he had never yet found any one to approach it.

He lighted the lamp and sat down, tired as he was, to look over some papers, but he found more difficulty than usual in commanding his attention ; however, he was so accustomed to banish any distracting ideas, that he was soon as completely absorbed in the intricate business before him, as if he had not just been mingling in such a gay scene, and yielding to such pleasurable sensations.



## CHAPTER IV.

But the life of man upon this fair earth is made up, for the most part, of little pains and little pleasures : the great wonder-flowers bloom but once in a lifetime.

LONGFELLOW.

“MAMMA, Aunt Mary is come ; she seems rather tired, therefore I am going to fetch her some tea, and then she will rest ; she is anxious to see you, but I would not let her come up stairs yet.”

Marion came into Mrs. Harcourt’s room to give her this intelligence, her eye beaming with pleasure ; her mother did not seem quite so satisfied, as she said :

“How tiresome of your aunt to come just as I wanted Martha ! I suppose she will be kept down stairs for an age unpacking ; there will be such confusion, I must go down and see her.”

Marion gently said she would do anything her aunt might require, and would send the maid away.

“ Oh, dear, no ! your aunt must be attended to, or your father will fancy she is slighted, and will be angry.”

Mrs. Harcourt went down stairs in this irritable state to receive her husband's sister, who was come to spend a week with her. After the meeting was over, and when Marion saw that her mother seemed inclined for a quiet chat, she left the room, and soon returned with some tea. Mrs. Merton sipped it, and seemed to enjoy it after her fatiguing journey.

“ How can you take such strong tea in the afternoon, Mary ?” said Mrs. Harcourt ; “ it is considered so very injurious to the nerves ; I would not do it on any account.”

“ Nothing refreshes me so much when I am wearied, my dear ; and I never suffer any inconvenience from it, though I believe it is not good for some constitutions.”

Mrs. Harcourt was one of those beings who seem sent into the world for the purpose of exercising the forbearance of their friends ; she always brought forward the disagreeable aspect of things, had no tact in avoiding unpleasant topics, and was always fancying herself slighted.

She had evidently once been pretty, but her countenance was now far from pleasing, for its expression was peevish and irritable, wanting that calm repose and tranquillity which is the great charm of old age. No doubt she had suffered sorrow, for who can live more than half a century without grief and uneasiness? But her trials had not been borne with that meek uncomplaining patience which alleviates every pang.

This is what stamps the character on the face of the aged!

There was indeed a contrast between Mrs. Harcourt and Mrs. Merton: one restless, first moving a chair, then looking for her handkerchief, regretting one thing and deprecating another, her presence having the same effect upon one as the buzzing of some insect; the other, in her grey silk dress and close cap, seated in an easy chair, looking hallowed and lovely in her quiet peacefulness.

Her features were not regular, the formation of her face was less good than that of Mrs. Harcourt, but oh! how different was the expression! Her clear blue eye beamed with benevolence, her brow, though graven with many wrinkles, was free from frowns, and her silvery hair braided smoothly over it, har-

monized well with the placid beauty of her countenance.

For to me there is an unutterable beauty in the face of an old person when the expression is this quiet resigned gentleness, and it is a beauty which is rarely met with, for few have gone through the battles of life with feelings which will not leave some painful trace on the face. Very young people seem to idolize an old friend, in whose smile they can read sympathy for their feelings, and whose voice soothes their little troubles, and whose kind advice helps them out of difficulties ; how gladly do they give up their noisy play to sit quietly to hear the promised story !

Mrs. Merton had suffered much and deeply, grief had written its sad tale upon her face ; but in all her anguish she had struggled to remember that trials are sent for our discipline, and to seek consolation in the recollection that this is not our resting-place.

Early in life she had become attached to a young officer of the highest character and promise ; after some time, they plighted their faith. Happy in themselves, without much addition of what the world calls happiness the days of courtship passed—too swiftly, perhaps—then they were married. How often did Mrs. Merton

look back to her wedding-day : the old country church, the good, venerable rector, her indulgent parents, her affectionate brother, and above all how often did she think of the low tones which had thrilled to her inmost heart, with which her husband spoke his vows.

How fondly she dwelt upon their delightful tour through Wales, all the loveliness of Nature brightened by the hues deep love threw over it ; how she thought of the happy, happy year they had spent in their pretty cottage with the creeping woodbine and clematis clustering over it ; of the tenderness, the affection that was showered upon her, the merry mornings, pleasant walks, and quiet, calm evenings they enjoyed together—all the joy, all the heartfelt sympathy they shared in that one short year.

Then came the tears, the embraces, the grief, the bitterness of parting. Captain Merton was compelled to join his regiment, then in the Peninsula. How anxiously did the young wife think of her absent husband, how tremblingly glance over the newspapers, how earnestly pray for his safety, how breathlessly expect his affectionate letters. Several months passed in this way, till he wrote in sanguine terms of their speedy meeting, picturing all the bliss of their reunion.

Then came the news of the battle of Waterloo ; the village bells were rung, illuminations blazed to celebrate its glory ; but with the intoxicating flush of victory came the mournful wail of death. Captain Merton was one of the many who were killed on that day of carnage, who were laid on that field of blood. Who shall describe the heart-breaking anguish of the widow, when the light of her life was taken from her, without the melancholy satisfaction of one parting look, or of hearing his last words.

In the first wild rush of sorrow, all that was painful in the death of her loved husband, the pictures imagination painted of unassuaged sufferings, unattended last moments, a solitary, unwept tomb, crowded upon her. Mrs. Merton shrunk from recalling the first few years of her widowhood, all the loneliness, all the sorrow of that season ; but as time shed balm over her wounded heart, resigned composure in some degree rewarded the struggles she made to bow to the dispensation : her grief was shrouded in the recesses of her spirit, life never regained its charms for her, but her gentle smile played again over her lips and she was always ready to sympathise in the joys of others, as well as in their sorrows.

Thus, with a very moderate income, she passed

her life in quiet retirement, relieving and so-lacing all the misery she could, seeking her happiness in that of others ; and now, in her old age, she was the very idealization of "that peace which the world cannot give." The society of such a character seems almost a foretaste of heaven, for do we not all connect the happiness of the future with rest from our labours? Even those most wedded to the wild excitement of the world can look forward to peaceful quiet ; they sometimes weary of the glaring sunshine of life, and would fain seek shelter in its cool shadows, and these steal with the purest calm over those whose pilgrimage is closing, whose sun is declining.

Why then should old age be looked upon as a cheerless season, as is so frequently the case? Though a retrospective glance over a long life must meet with many disappointments, many trials and many sorrows, yet also there must be much for which to be grateful, the golden thread of many joys is woven in even the gloomiest tissue of existence.

Both Marion and Adeline were very fond of their aunt. Her visits, which were very rare, were always looked forward to with great pleasure ; she was so considerate, so gentle, and with such high, good principles, that her advice

was received with the greatest deference. Mrs. Harcourt was jealous of her daughters' affection for Mrs. Merton, indeed she was annoyed by their showing any preference for any one, she seemed to fancy she had an exclusive right to their attention.

One morning during Mrs. Merton's visit, she entered her room, and found Marion reading to her aunt, and Adeline learning some of the mysteries of knitting ; it was a happy, peaceful-looking party : Adeline's merry laugh often sounded, she was amused by her own dulness of comprehension. As soon as Mrs. Harcourt appeared, she held up her work with a smile of delight.

"Look, mamma, at what Aunt Mary has taught me, I shall soon be able to knit a purse like that one Mrs. Colston showed us yesterday. I do really think aunt knows every kind of fancy work that ever was invented. Is it not a pretty stitch?"

A shade of annoyance crossed Mrs. Harcourt's countenance as she glanced at the work and said :

"If you were so anxious about it, why did you not speak to me? you could have gone to the Berlin shop in Devonpont Street, and been initiated, not that I particularly admire it."



"But I never can learn from those people, they explain so badly ; and Aunt Mary is so patient, and never minds being asked the same thing twenty times, I like her to show me."

"Marion, you have torn the lace on your collar, go up stairs and change it."

"What a pity, how can I have been so careless ? I will go as soon as I have finished this chapter ; it is a pity to leave off in the middle, and let aunt be in the agony of suspense while I am gone : it will not keep me five minutes."

"No, go at once. I am sure your ~~aunt~~ will not mind waiting for a short time. What can it signify whether it is the end or middle of a chapter, but it is always the way ; whatever I wish, you oppose. I understand the motive."

Marion immediately closed the book, and left the room, her colour deepened slightly, which was the only sign of annoyance she manifested. She soon returned, with her usual calm, gentle smile, and resumed her reading ; but Mrs. Harcourt kept constantly interrupting her with some trivial remarks, so that all pleasure in the book was destroyed, she therefore took up her work instead. The harmony of the morning was gone, an unpleasant feeling

had crept over all, but of course no one allowed this to appear. Mrs. Merton conversed in her usual cheerful way, and all joined her; even Mrs. Harcourt's peevish tone disappeared by degrees under the calming influence.

These little *contretemps* were constantly happening in the Harcourt family, unpleasant ideas were often roused, it is true they were but trifles but constant trifles make up a large sum of disagreeables; few have the power of either pleasing or annoying others by grand events, they rarely occur during life, but every one has frequent opportunities of soothing or irritating those around them in mere trifles.

Mrs. Harcourt never neglected any of the great duties of life, but she performed them too much as if they were *duties* not pleasures; they wanted the spirit of love, that blessed spirit which "hopeth all things, and believeth all things." Watchful and anxious as a mother, she had neglected nothing which could have improved her children's physical or intellectual, or even moral culture; but there had been too much effort, too much fuss with it all; there had been too little attention given to the cultivation of the finer feelings, those of the appreciation of the beautiful, of sympathy; the affections had not been considered; she decided

that a certain line of conduct was right, and then without hesitation or regard for the partialities, or repulsions of others, without any allowance, without any soothing kindness, that plan was carried out, relentlessly as the scythe mows down the smiling flowers with the rank weeds.

Her children could not look back upon their childish days, without painful reminiscences of their little fancies for flowers, for pet animals being not only slighted, but harshly forbidden ; they had few recollections of gentle tones, of tender caresses, of all those nameless associations of love, which should hang over the opening scenes of life. No, there had not been time for these softening influences ; there had been unwearying care, assiduous watchfulness, strict superintendence, but the young yearn for more than this ; there had been too much fear, too much irritation, too many prohibitions in Mrs. Harcourt's code of morals. And so completely was she imbued with this mode of treatment, that now, when her children were growing up, she did not understand how to relax her authority gracefully, how to change the guardian into the friend, how to *receive* confidence as a gift, instead of demanding it as a right.

She did not understand the active, working thoughts which arise in the mind, when it is

emerging from extreme youth into the warm energies of life ; she could not calmly watch order and harmony evolve themselves from the apparent chaos of thought and imagination. Just at that season when the stéadiest, gentlest hand is necessary, when the less authority is asserted, the longer it will last ; Mrs. Harcourt, fearful of losing that maternal influence of which she was so jealous, resented more severely than ever any deviations from the established rules, interfered more dogmatically than ever with the exercise of any taste or pursuit, until her children almost avoided her, fearing the usual fault-finding.

She felt this keenly, for, as I have before said, she was, and had been, an anxious mother ; and although her daughters acquiesced in her wishes, and obeyed her desires, she could not help feeling it was with the obedience of the letter, rather than with the ready love of the spirit. Then, instead of seeking to win their cordial affection, and using her judgment to prevent that sorest evil arising which can infest family peace—I mean the concealment of wounded feelings, rankling annoyance buried beneath the fear of violating the duty of respect—she too often indulged in a tone of sarcasm, or implied unjust motives, conduct which is productive of

the worst consequences in any case, but is inexcusable in a parent.

Had Marion not had very strong, very warm feelings, they would have been crushed long ago under this injudicious treatment, or she would have been led away by them to forget that respect due to a parent from a child under any circumstances; but she had strong resolution, and a firm will, and never allowed herself to answer her mother's constant reproofs, although injustice is hard to bear, particularly by the young, for in them a strong desire to resist it seems implanted. She refrained from any reply; her cheek would flush—that she could not conquer; her heart would beat more rapidly—that she could not control, but her voice was as gentle, and her manner as calm as ever, during the most irritating attacks. This equanimity had not been attained without painful struggles; but when Marion once determined that a thing was right, she spared nothing to accomplish it.

Adeline's high spirit had not learnt this self-command; she sometimes spoke high, passionate words; she could not restrain her surging feelings when she felt wrong motives were imputed to her, or, what hurt her far more, when she heard Marion blamed for what she knew was not her fault, or taunted for sentiments, which she was

fully convinced she never entertained. All this prevented the Harcourts from enjoying that domestic comfort which from external circumstances they seemed entitled to possess.

The world in general, perhaps, considered them a happy family ; it cannot penetrate beyond the exterior, nor see the struggles and annoyances behind the veil. One or two friends might have a glimmering idea of the true state of things—Murray was one of them ; but he was a very keen observer, and had an intuitive knowledge of character. Marion had far too good taste, to say nothing of good feeling, to breathe a word to any one of family matters, therefore Murray's information was entirely self-derived.

Mr. Harcourt's influence had always been of a very negative description : incessantly occupied in professional avocations, he spent but little time in his family, and then was too wearied to enter into discussions ; and too glad to be at ease and enjoying quiet, to attempt establishing any arrangements. Such a mode must have a most inimical effect upon the education and moral training of young people, more especially with sons, who require a stronger hand, and firmer authority than most women can maintain.

Fortunately the Harcourts had but one son, who had grown up with much of the character

naturally to be expected from the management I have attempted to describe. He was naturally volatile, warm-hearted, and clever ; but the strict discipline to which he had been subjected had seldom given him the opportunity of exercising his feelings. He had been irritated and watched too closely in trifles, until he went to a public school ; there he found himself nearly independent, and he, perhaps, rather trespassed upon the voluntary system pursued there.

Before he had been there long, he was so accustomed to see, what had been denounced most severely at home, things of daily occurrence, that he soon became careless of such prohibitions. He was strictly honourable, in the world's sense of honour : he was generous, he was popular, but he wanted self-restraint, he wanted a high standard of right, his principles were too deeply tinctured with the world's code of morals ; and thus he had left school, thus he had entered life, without one controlling hand to guide him, for he had long thrown off those fetters about trifles which had been riveted too closely in early life, and with them had been severed those ties of reliance and dependence which should subsist between a child and his parents.

He was now travelling on the continent. His

letters, though amusing and clever, were rare, and Marion had many anxious thoughts for him ; but she could do nothing but write as her dear, affectionate heart dictated. She knew nothing of the temptations, to which he was exposed, or of the reckless life which he had been leading, but she knew he was wild and headstrong ; and always feared for him, and thought she would do all to preserve his affections, and to cultivate his feelings for home.

And she was right ! Little do people think of the importance it is to keep up kind recollections of home influences in men who are struggling with the world's realities, or sailing down the sea of its pleasures ; how much good may be done by encouraging them to think with pleasure of their home, and to cherish the memory of its inmates with a tender and loving care.



## CHAPTER V.

To linger on the magic face  
Of human beauty, and from light and shade  
Alike to draw a lesson : 'tis to love  
The cadences of voices that are tuned  
By majesty and purity of thought ;  
To gaze on woman's beauty, as a star,  
Whose purity and distance make it fair.

N. P. WILLIS.

MRS. MERTON'S visit soon passed ; she returned to her retired country house, to her quiet pursuits and amusements, leaving her nieces about to commence the gaiety of the London season. The Harcourts had a large acquaintance, so that they were obliged to enter into more society than perhaps they quite liked, but now that Adeline was introduced, they were glad to have the opportunity of taking her out, as she really enjoyed it.

They had been to a late ball, when, as usual, Adeline, admired by all, had danced incessantly ; however, she and Marion had taken a turn in the Park the following morning, and were now sitting in the drawing-room after luncheon. The window was thrown open, and the breeze floated gently in, perfumed with the breath of the mignonette which was in full beauty in the balcony ; a few flowers in a richly coloured Bohemian vase stood on the table, which was strewn with books, work, and all those elegant little trifles which so enhance one's comfort.

The piano was open, and some loose sheets of music lay upon it, as if it had been lately used ; the sofas and chairs of every form and variety, seemed wheeled into the most comfortable corners. Adeline was half-sitting, half-reclining, in one of her graceful attitudes, upon a low couch near the window, her rich dark hair gathered into a large loose knot, and confined in a silk net, her dress of sunny hues, blended in magic shades, hung gracefully around her ; she had a book open on a little table near her, on which stood a carved ivory work-box of fairy-like delicacy ; all around her spoke of refined luxury and exquisite taste. She was pale, and a shade of lassitude seemed over her, the result of the excitement and fatigue of the pre-

ceding evening ; but she looked most lovely, most fascinating, as she dreamily reclined and talked to Marion, who was seated at the writing-table, the other side of the room.

The lace curtain cast a faint shadow upon her as she bent over her writing-desk, her long wavy hair drooping on the paper. Notwithstanding her employment, she was talking to Adeline, who was too wearied to do anything but lounge. She threw herself back among the cushions with an exclamation of surprise at Marion's having power to sit writing so busily ; and just then the door opened, and Mr. Stanley and Mr. Murray were announced.

The latter came forward with the cordiality of an old friend, and after shaking hands with Marion as he passed, went on to Adeline, who had risen from her listless posture to receive him. He drew his favourite chair to her tiny table, and chatted with her ; she took out her knitting, and commenced it most assiduously ; but Adeline never could work and talk, the gay silks soon fell from her fingers as she raised her eyes to Murray's, letting him read in them the different feelings aroused by his conversation.

“ We were up till very late last night, Mr. Murray, and I am completely tired, or you would not have found me lounging so idly ; I

assure you I am generally a very industrious character, but after a ball I always enjoy an afternoon spent in a semi-sleep, just gossiping it over with Marion."

"You have been singing this morning, at least your music is about, so you have not been perfectly idle."

"I just tried some new things they sent from the library, but that did not occupy much time. How was it you were not at the Deloraines last night? We had a most agreeable party."

"I do not visit them, though I frequently meet them in society. I was told it was a brilliant affair."

"I thought you knew every one! I met several of your friends: the pretty Mrs. Rawdon was there; you remember her? You pointed her out to me at the Brandons. I admire her extremely, but she does not appear very amusing, at least I could not get on with her very well; but perhaps she is one of those ladies who reserve their brightest conversation for their gentlemen friends."

"Now, that is a severe remark, and I think unjust to Mrs. Rawdon; many people are so reserved, so incased in a species of bark, that it requires some little art, and no little trouble to

arrive at the good which they possess—they want drawing out.”

“Ah! but every one has not that gift; I have often longed for some talisman to unlock the bar of constraint so generally maintained.”

“That is the point; you may suspect people to be scent-bottles, but you cannot tell if you be right until you draw the cork; of course after all one is sometimes disappointed, yet I feel sure that very often we lose many pleasant acquaintance, and certainly much agreeable intercourse, by not taking the trouble to discover of what our neighbours are composed; some are like herbs, you must absolutely trample upon them before you can extract their sweetness.”

“You are right, but still you do not explain how this is to be done; I understand the existing evils, and I can imagine the proposed improvement in our intercourse, yet I do not see *how* we are to melt the ice of reserve and ceremony, or by what stratagem we are to carry the outworks.”

“Would not sympathy in the feelings and interests of others do much; and a more independent mode of reasoning, less subservience to what people will say and think of us, combined

with more real deference for their habits and weaknesses? I do not think this improvement is only required in general society, family intercourse would be greatly facilitated, were there a mutual unbending, less of our English *sang-froid*."

"But this reserve of which you complain so bitterly is inculcated in us from our cradle, it seems to me to be the great secret of success, a large element in that prudence which one hears so highly extolled; I confess I cannot understand it all; I think people might soon get on with me."

Murray thought the same, and inwardly hoped that Adeline might never be thrown with those who would not understand her, or, what would be far worse, would mis-apprehend her sensitive, yet haughty nature.

"Have you seen the new views of the East yet?" Adeline asked. "You would be a good judge of their merits, having travelled there; they have delighted me, the rich, glowing colouring, and the picturesque costumes are so very beautiful."

"No, I have not looked at them. I understand they are admirable. Are they in the room?"

“Yes, in the large portfolio, I will open it.”

Murray followed Adeline to seek the drawings, and was soon engaged in admiring them, and in recounting to his attentive listener the wonders and beauties of Egypt and Palestine.

Meanwhile, Stanley and Marion were improving the acquaintance they had commenced at Mrs. Brandon's ball. He had most fastidious ideas of how ladies should look in the morning, and had often been disappointed in the daylight appearance of those whom he had admired in full dress, he had expected to have felt the same on seeing Marion, but he could not help thinking that she looked far better in her light muslin dress, and pale blue ribbons, as she sat in her low chair with her work, than she had done in the crowded ball.

The cool, fresh atmosphere of the drawing-room was so pleasant to him after his walk in the hot sun, the comfortable, habitable air which pervaded it, conveyed most agreeable impressions, and Marion's frank, unaffected manners completed the charm. She possessed the rare quality of being a good listener, without which, conversation is never easily sustained; they were discussing some books

they had just read, Marion was defending some of the opinions given in it, which Stanley could not appreciate.

“Do you not believe in real, true affection?” she asked; “in deep feelings which nothing can efface? in love which is based on firm foundations, on holy, pure principles, which is so perfect, that all doubt, all suspicion dissolves before its bright influence?”

“I fear I cannot. I have seen too much of the world, I never met with any one who seemed to me capable of such feelings, all is now so superficial, expediency is the order of the day, men marry for money and connection, women for position, vanity, or even pique.”

“No, I cannot believe this; of course I know such instances do sometimes happen, but I hope they are the exceptions, not the rule. You look at unfortunate examples, and they assert their universality. How wretched you must be, with such an opinion of human nature. What is life worth, if one can never hope to meet with noble feelings and true sympathy?”

“I wish you may never have reason to agree with me, but I scarcely dare indulge such a hope. Have you never thought that this disappointment of our highest impulses is one of the great trials of life, part of the



discipline of character we need? would not this world be too happy for us to remember it is only our battle-field, if we found all our aspirations responded to, all our affections returned?"

"You must misunderstand me, if you imagine that I think we meet with nothing to try us, nothing to vex us; what I say is, that I believe some are capable of any self-sacrifice, any devotion for those they love, and you will not credit this. You laugh at my favourite character in the book we were talking of just now, and at me, for thinking it a probable one; you launch all your sarcasms at its being overdrawn, unheard of. *If* you be right, I am terribly mistaken; but if you be wrong, as I firmly believe you are, all I can say is, that I hope some day you will have reason to change your mind, and then you will appreciate my favourite books, and cease to wonder, as you now do, at the possibility of my believing in what you call high-flown romance."

"Thank you for your good wishes: nothing would delight me more than to be able to make my recantation, but I should have a large experience to efface; however, I have not quite given myself up to despair yet."

"Despair! that is a word I cannot endure;

it is only fit for fallen angels, not for us, with all our aims and hopes: 'Hope on, hope ever,' is my motto. How busily Adeline and Mr. Murray are engaged with those drawings! they are so beautiful! You have seen them of course, the views of the Holy Land?"

"Yes, often; they are exquisite. Murray is delighted to have an opportunity of expatiating upon his Eastern adventures; he was roaming about there for some time, leaving his friends in a most glorious state of ignorance about his proceedings: we did not know if he had become enamoured of his interesting appearance in a turban, and consequently turned Mussulman, or whether he had been drowned in one of the cataracts; until one evening he made his appearance at the club, with his usual indifferent manner, and saluted us as if we had parted the preceding evening in Belgravia, instead of two years having elapsed, with all the crowd of incidents and events which flows into every man's fate during such a period. We were all very glad to have him among us again, for I assure you Murray is a great favourite with us; indeed, I cannot help smiling at the influence he seems to possess over many fellows, who, in all their scrapes and difficulties, have recourse to

Murray's advice as if it were an infallible remedy for everything."

Just as the young men were thinking of taking leave, Mrs. Harcourt entered; she apologised for having absented herself, but an appointment had unavoidably detained her. More general conversation was adopted after her appearance—the *tête-à-têtes* into which the party had been previously divided being broken up.

Murray was inestimable in starting and upholding small talk; and as Mrs. Harcourt was a clever woman, the ball of conversation was not allowed to drop. He was particularly skilled in talking to *chaperones*, and prided himself upon it; he selected subjects likely to please them, and his deferential manner always recommended him.

Stanley was less successful on such occasions; the mocking smile had returned to his lip, and the cold impassive tone to his voice, which seemed called up by society; seldom he felt sufficiently interested by people to allow them an insight into the depths of his thoughts or the earnestness of his character, therefore he was not so generally liked as Murray, though by the few who understood him he was valued in

no common way. He and Adeline were having a sharp encounter of wit, he being bitter and she brilliant in their dissection and description of acquaintance; Marion in vain made a conciliatory remark and ventured a softening observation, the war of tongues continued until the gentlemen departed.

They left their cards at several houses, and then lounged into the Park, fresh and lovely in the beauty of early summer. The crowd of equipages, with well-appointed servants, and filled with ladies, radiant in brightest hues, combined to produce a gay scene. Stanley and Murray passed by the Serpentine, glittering in the bright sunshine, with the green turf stretching down to its opposite banks, and glad to find themselves under the shade of the old elm-trees nearer Hyde Park Corner, they remained chatting with some friends who were lounging there, making their comments on the carriages and their fair occupants as they passed.

Stanley felt wearied by the constant whirl, annoyed by the tone of conversation around him, bored by the salutations he received; he longed for the calm quiet of the country. He was just turning to leave the throng, when he saw the Harcourts' carriage coming in the line: he lingered to see it pass. Marion gave him a

bright smile and cordial bow as he lifted his hat; and the sudden blush which mantled her cheek, while it added to the brilliancy of her complexion, gave her a deeper interest in Stanley's mind. He turned to Murray and just caught the earnest gaze he fixed on Adeline as she leant back. He said to him, "We shall meet at the Club for dinner," and turned towards Kensington Gardens in the hope of seeing the Harcourts' carriage waiting at the entrance, but he was disappointed.

He strolled under the lofty trees, among whose foliage the birds were gaily carolling; and with the exception of a few gay bonnets and butterfly-like parasols, which crossed the distant paths, he could have fancied himself in the country. He soon fell into his old musings, and as he pondered over every word he had heard from Marion, he insensibly began to connect her with those tender images he loved to think of.

He was certainly fascinated by her appearance, but it was the tone of her feelings which made him think so differently of her, to the many pretty girls he met in society. He fancied that she took a higher view of life than is usual, that she would not shrink from its trials and duties, that misfortune would not alarm her, nor reverses corrode her, that she would bow to

them, and yet rise superior to them. He did not look forward to the future as a scene which must bring happiness as an *of course*, he felt himself strong and ready to buffet with the waves of care, but then he longed for some one on whom to garner up his sympathies and affections; he knew the immense importance such a possession would be to his character, yet he shrunk from the chance of being deceived.

Then came his miserable doubts, his misgiving suspicions of woman's motives, the fear of loving and loving hopelessly, and almost decided that it would be wiser for him to avoid Marion's society, for fear of getting more interested about her, when the chances were, that she was but little different from others; but then the clear, truthful look in her eyes, her earnest manner, made him feel in his inmost heart that there *was* a difference, and that too no slight one.

Thus he reflected; and as he left the Gardens and passed through the now quiet Park, his imagination was rapidly portraying a home, blessed with fondest affection—it was his own—and Marion was the presiding spirit, the guardian-angel of his future fate, whether in the sunshine of prosperity or under the storm-cloud of adversity.

Waking up from this entrancing dream, Arthur found himself in busy Piccadilly, and saw the carriages rapidly driving by, taking people to dinner-parties, which appears the most senseless mode of spending lovely summer evenings which man's bad taste ever devised. Fancy sitting for hours in a hot room, crowded with candles, and highly seasoned dishes, perhaps beside the persons for whom of all others you least care, when you know there is a clear pure sky and fresh air to be enjoyed.

Stanley joined Murray at the Club, and seating themselves by one of the large open windows, they had their dinner in comparative coolness and quiet. As they were sipping their claret, Murray proposed going to the Opera.

"Come, Stanley, there's a good fellow, they are going to play my favourite opera; we shall be in time for the duet in the second act; we can get stalls as we go, and then of course plenty of boxes will be charmed to receive us."

"No; really, Edward, I am not in the mood to-night for the Opera; besides I should have to dress, which is too much even to think of."

"Nonsense, don't be lazy; it is a capital night; the new ballet is to be produced, perhaps that will be an inducement, as you do not appear musically inclined."

“ You know I hate the ballet, so if that be your last resource as a temptation, I am safely ensconced here ; but don’t you stay away, it is a pity not to indulge one’s taste when it is inclined for the Opera ; when that is the case, I know few pleasanter ways of spending the evening, but sometimes it is the most intense bore I know of ; I should be as savage as a bear if I accompanied you to-night. I am in one of my solitary fits, so go without me. You had better be quick, jump into a cab, or you will lose your pet scene ; not that I really believe that is the only reason that makes you so anxious to go to-night ; however, at all events, it is an excuse *bien trouvée*—never mind your coffee for once ; there, be off with you. Good-night.”

Murray rushed off, and by means of a little hurrying did just manage to take his seat before his much-admired *morceau* commenced. The delicious tones of the prima donna thrilled through the house, and wild tumultuous was the applause she received. The Opera was crowded, lovely faces appeared on every side arrayed in brilliant toilettes ; Murray’s lorgnettes were in constant use, he seemed seeking some one amid the innumerable countenances in the boxes ; however, his search seemed unsuccessful,



for after visiting two or three, he soon returned to his stall, but still continued the restless levelling of his glasses.

At last a fair arm, shrouded in black lace, drew back the crimson curtains, and revealed the countenance Murray had so long sought for. He soon vanished from the stalls, and his lofty brow and brilliant eyes might be discovered in the shadowy background of the lady's box ; there he remained listening more to the low tones of his companion than to the opera until she drew her scarlet mantle over her, and rose to depart ; Murray escorted her to her carriage, and then returned to his chambers.

This was the beautiful Mrs. Rawdon, to whom all paid such devotion, one of those women who live but for admiration, and who seem to be the legitimate property of the public ; seldom seen with her husband, yet with sufficient tact to preserve tolerable appearances, piquant without wit, possessing taste without real refinement, she still held a prominent place in society, and was visited even by those who considered themselves very scrupulous.

After Murray left the Club, Stanley went into the library, and establishing himself in an easy-chair, took a book and remained there

reading until late, enjoying the perfect quiet which prevailed. This was Stanley's favourite room; here he was generally to be found. He was a great reader, one who seemed like an intellectual *gourmand*; to such men a good club has great charms, for there they meet with any book they may choose, and without any interruptions can enjoy the engrossing interest of fiction, or study works of a deeper class. What a blessing it is for a man to be fond of reading! to find it not only a resource, but an intense pleasure; he is independent of society, he does not feel in want of a companion, his associations are with the master minds of every age.

How assiduously should this taste be cultivated in early life: study should not be made the bugbear of the years of boyhood, and by that means prevent any pleasure being taken in it afterwards. The young people of this age are kept too closely to their educational pursuits, the numerous accomplishments and acquirements which seem to be considered indispensable, preclude the joyous freedom of the old-fashioned childhood, during which we used to accumulate lovely impressions of Nature, which haunted us through life, instead of the weary recollections

of hard grammar-lessons which could not be comprehended, and vain, precocious experiences of juvenile balls which are graven on the memories of too many of this generation, who have had few innocent pleasures, few natural enjoyments provided for them during that impressionable age, when every event leaves its indelible trace behind.

## CHAPTER VI.

Does it not offend you to hear people speaking of Art and Nature as opposite and discordant things? Nature is a revelation of God, Art a revelation of man.

LONGFELLOW.

EARLY one bright summer morning, Mrs. Colston and I called for Marion and Adeline, and we all went to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy. When we entered, we found few people there besides ourselves, so that we had undisturbed opportunity for examining the paintings.

It produces a strange effect upon me to gaze upon the walls of a picture gallery. Here a scene of impassioned emotion meets your eye, and perhaps next it hangs a landscape, with its rippling waters and deep shadows; then again, the care-worn features of some busy member of

public life frown upon us, or the speaking smile of some lovely face is glowingly depicted—it is like life, beaming with light and beauty as we look at it from a distance, but diversified with painful incidents and dark scenes as we examine its details more closely.

Then I cannot help picturing to myself the various characters and moods of the designers of the many objects before me ; the stern vigour of one who has disdained the magic of colour, and has concentrated all his ideas in the pure majesty of form ; the vivid imagination of another, who with fairy pencil has almost touched his nymphs and syrens with the hues of life ; the truthful simplicity of those who, flying into the rural scenes of Nature, have portrayed her in her pristine loveliness, without any trace of man's workmanship, or any accompaniment of man's passions.

I think of all the dreams of renown, all the aspirations for success, which have been felt while the artist embodied his ideas upon the canvas before me ; then of the blighting indifference, of the galling criticisms which his work experiences when it leaves the studio, where perhaps it was first conceived, and where its author gave the last finishing touches to his creation before he sent it into the bleak, cold world.

Nothing annoys me more than finding myself among pictures with one who does not feel their beauties, and yet considers it necessary to talk incessantly of art, to pass sweeping censures in technical terms, without really comprehending their meaning, who praises the depth of this picture, and the aerial perspective of another, when perhaps such deep feelings are aroused by the incidents portrayed, that the mechanism employed is utterly forgotten and disregarded. None of my companions were of this class, they were too susceptible of the real beauties of art, too ardent in feeling to offend me in this way.

Marion's taste had been cultivated ; she discerned the artistic merits of the paintings, and entered into the spirit of them in a way which delighted me. I thought what a charming companion she would be in a tour on the continent, when one could inspect the treasures of foreign art.

We had been in the Exhibition some time when I perceived Stanley, with a young man whom I did not know. He was tall, and elegant in his appearance, with a bright blue eye beaming with spirit and intelligence, a light brown moustache shaded his mouth, and gave character to his countenance. I saw them before

the rest of our party, and before Stanley recognised us, for his eye was turned upon the walls, while that of his companion wandered round the room. I saw it rest upon Adeline, who was sitting on the centre bench, gazing upwards; he then turned and spoke to Stanley, who looked towards her, he smiled, and saying a few words to his friend, came forward and joined us.

"This is indeed an unexpected pleasure," he said, as he shook hands with us. "I did not know you paid such early visits here. We unfortunate men who are engaged all day are obliged to come in the morning, or not at all."

"It is perfectly useless pretending to see the pictures late in the day, when the rooms are crowded, nothing is more tantalising; and then the brilliant remarks upon *chiaroscuro* and perspective which you hear from fancied amateurs is too absurd," said Adeline.

Stanley turned towards Mrs. Colston, saying:

"My friend Captain Vernon is here. May I introduce him to you? He is the best fellow in the world; he is on leave from India, and has come to town to enjoy himself."

Mrs. Colston expressing a willing consent, Stanley crossed the room, and putting his arm through Vernon's, brought him to us. After

the ceremony of introduction was over, we soon became very sociable, for our new acquaintance seemed the most frank and merry of mortals.

His lively wit amused Adeline particularly ; he addressed his conversation chiefly to her, and appeared quite delighted with her evident appreciation of his remarks. Stanley proposed that, as we had been round the rooms, we should point out to them the things worth looking at. Mrs. Colston was too fatigued, to do this, however, the rest of our party willingly assented ; we promised to return to her before we left the room, therefore she sat down to wait for us.

Marion and Stanley paused frequently to examine the paintings ; they both really enjoyed their beauties. He seemed silent, nay, almost grave, which was uncommon ; but his countenance expressed so much feeling when he gazed on Marion, as she turned towards him to speak of the pictures, that I felt sure the change in his manner proceeded not from indifference or preoccupation, but from his interest in his companion.

Vernon was talking rapidly and well, making droll comments on the pictures, or running up some impromptu romance explanatory of them ; Adeline threw in some assisting hints, and



between them they really formed some amusing addenda to the catalogue. Adeline stopped before one painting, as being the one which had pleased her most. It represented a field of battle enveloped in deep shadow, and in strong contrast the moon streamed in cold brilliancy upon it. A wounded war-horse was in the foreground, starting back with alarm at an approaching wolf; and a young man lay near it, his pale countenance stamped with death, the blood upon his brow, his sword beside him seemed just fallen from his relaxed grasp; broken weapons and all the sad trophies of war were scattered in the background.

There was a force of expression, a simplicity of arrangement in this painting which was most touching. Adeline and Vernon gazed upon it in silence; all their light-heartedness vanished. She was thinking of the tears, the broken hearts of those who were far away from the grave of their young warrior; and he was feeling the truth, the reality of the representation, for he had seen the young and ardent struck down in all their vigour, and staining with their blood at night, the turf on which they had so proudly stepped at morning.

They looked long upon it; at last Adeline turned away with a sigh. I saw Vernon glance

at her with an admiring look ; he felt that she understood all that picture suggested, and with the pleased feeling which creeps over us when we know that we are comprehended and sympathized with, they passed on, more subdued in manner than before.

Marion and Stanley were looking upon a painting which the others had but slightly glanced at ; it was the "Diet of Worms." The crowded chamber, the Emperor in his royal robes, the proud and jewelled nobles, the stern priests, the warlike guards, the parchments and books piled upon the tables ; and amid all this accumulated array of the loftiest, the most powerful on earth, stood the bold, energetic form of Martin Luther, the poor miner's son, the monk of Wittenberg, alone in that vast assembly of his bitter enemies, the lines of firm, unshakeable resolve, of fiery activity, of untiring zeal upon his countenance, yet with the calm expression of unshaken faith, of steadfast trust in his eye.

Yes, there he stood, that man whose master-intellect shook the foundation of the most widely-spread, the most strongly-supported hierarchy the world ever knew ; the man who worked greater changes in the very essence of the feelings and powers of earth, than was ever

wrought since the overthrow of the idols and temples of pagan Rome. This picture was marvellously executed ; the massing of the many figures, the gorgeousness of the colouring, the regal dignity of that great monarch Charles V., and the sublime forgetfulness of self in the keen struggle for Truth of the Reformer, were given with a master's hand.

Stanley was riveted ; he could appreciate this confronting of all obstacles for the furtherance of one grand object, this bold challenge of all the concentrated barriers which opposed it. He turned to Marion, saying :

“ This is magnificent ! I can understand *such* self-devotion.”

“ So can I ; but I can also believe in equal courage from other causes, from the feelings without the support of such an intellect as Luther's. Look at this picture of our Edward, with his Queen sucking the poison from his arm ; was not that magnanimity, self-renunciation, forgetfulness of death, for the sake of one she loved ? This is one example of what I tried to convince you once before.”

Marion, with a true woman's feelings, felt more sympathy with the trials of the feelings, than with those of the intellect ; not that she was insensible to all that was expressed in the

picture which so charmed Stanley ; far from it.

I was much interested in watching my young friends ; they both looked so happy, and seemed so much interested ; but there was a wide difference between them. Marion looked calmly content, with an expression of deep thoughtfulness in her eyes ; inexperienced, fresh in every feeling, she was unconscious of the reason of her enjoyment ; the knowledge that she was comprehended, that she was with one whose opinions were those of which she had often dreamed, and who addressed her in that sweet low tone which has such an irresistible charm for woman—all united to enthral her.

Her best, her brightest affections were enshrined in her inmost heart ; they had never been called up ; there they were, buried in untouched, unsullied purity, ready to gush forth, a treasure of riches, upon the being who should win her. She had not heard their voice ; the magic hues of the entrancing passion of love were unknown. I wondered if the gentle sadness on her brow was the foreshadowing of the dawn of her heart's deepest emotion, that tender melancholy which seems to accompany the first approach of the greatest joy which life has in its gift.

Adeline's eyes were absolutely dancing in light. Vernon's brilliancy, his amusing conversation had interested her excessively; she looked radiantly lovely; there was no still cloud on her brow; her deeper sentiments were untouched; her interest was from without; the chord of all-pervading feeling had not been vibrated: no, instinct with life and beauty, she walked beside Vernon, who seemed quite giddy with spirits, exhilarated by Adeline's mirth, and inspired by the spell of her magnificent loveliness.

We at last finished our inspection of the pictures, and returned to Mrs. Colston, who fortunately had met with some friends, whose chat had amused her during our long absence.

As it was yet early, I proposed to fulfil a promise I had long made the young ladies, of showing them my club-house. It happened that Vernon was also a member, therefore he proposed accompanying us. Stanley was compelled to leave us, for he had to advocate a cause at Westminster. He looked very reluctant to depart; but it was imperative, so we parted at the door of the Exhibition.

Vernon escorted Adeline and Mrs. Colston through the streets, while Marion took my arm. I talked to her of Stanley, and tried to discover

what she thought of him. From the little she said, I soon found she had pondered over his words, and by means of that quick perception with which most women are endued, she had penetrated some of his motives and ideas. He had won the first step—he had interested her, he had connected himself with her thoughts of the *reality* of things, more than with the beauty and superficiality of life—and this was the most sure step towards permanent regard in such a character as Marion's.

It was not far to the Club. Adeline was charmed with the novelty of all she saw; the spacious rooms, the luxurious furniture, the taste displayed in all the decorations surprised her: she dearly loved all that gratified the eye. Vernon knew many of the men who were lounging about, and had to return many salutations; he amused us with his little anecdotes and witticisms on the listless beings who were lolling on the sofas and easy-chairs, and gave such malicious descriptions that they were very like *soubriquets*, although I dare say, had he been accused of such a thing, he would have disclaimed it.

His vanity was gratified by escorting Adeline, for he soon saw the admiring glances cast upon

her. He was a man who was pleased to possess a little of the approbation of society ; even in what gave himself satisfaction, he liked to have his judgment confirmed by the agreeing sentence of his friends, and I am sure that, however much he was charmed by Adeline, he felt her influence increase by the not-to-be-mistaken opinion of the Club in her favour. After we had visited all the various rooms, and admired all the paintings on the staircase, we bade Vernon farewell, and returned home.

It will now be necessary to give some slight sketch of Vernon's character and prospects before we see him again. He was the second son of General Vernon, of the Indian army, who had been tolerably fortunate in his career ; he had married the daughter of one of our English peers somewhat late in life. Our friend Frederic inherited some property from his mother ; but, in compliance with his father's wish, had entered the Company's service, and had served ten years in India, and was now home on leave.

He had been fortunate enough to get his troop before he returned ; yet he still thought of going back, as he rather liked the mode of life there.

General Vernon had lost his wife a year or two before Frederic had left this country. She was a gentle, amiable being, and had been the very light of the General's life ; for in his early days, he had been in much active service, banished from his native country, from his family and friends, when India was in a very different condition to what that now established and far-extending empire presents. When he married and retired into private life, he thoroughly enjoyed the quiet happiness he had so often pictured to himself in the midst of his arduous duties.

He had showered every kind attention upon his wife during a long period of delicate health ; and when at last she sunk under illness, the now old man felt how deep had been his attachment to her, and how irreparable was his loss. However, his two sons who were just entering life, endeavoured to divert his mind, to interest him in their proceedings. He rallied, the lamp of life burned on, feebly it is true, yet for some few years.

After Frederic went to India, and Philip, the eldest son, had entered Parliament, which kept him much away from home, General Vernon gradually declined, and then went to his rest.



Philip inherited the beautiful estate in Devonshire, where he had spent his boyhood under the kind care of his parents, and here Frederic had been staying since his return from India. Sadly had he missed the welcome he would have received, had death not visited his paternal home ; how sad the once cheerful drawing-room looked, where his mother used to sit.

Lady Louisa had been a kind, fond mother, and both her sons tearfully thought of the past, as they gazed on her sofa and work-table, which their father had never allowed to be displaced, and which they treasured as a remembrance of her habits. Philip and Captain Vernon were capital friends, there had been no jealousy, no heart-burnings between them ; and now that the latter had returned to England, Castleton, his brother's house, was always open to him, and pressing invitations were often written to induce him to be more there ; for although Frederic was possessed of considerable property, he had not provided himself with any settled residence : the London clubs afforded him all the conveniences he required, and the style of life he enjoyed.

He anticipated going to Castleton at the end of the summer, to be in readiness for the shooting season, therefore he was very well content

with his desultory life, and comfortable chambers. Frederic was a noble-hearted fellow, generous and ardent in his feelings, but too prone to act upon impulse, too easily led away by any fancy of the moment ; he often involved himself in difficulties from which he suffered no slight inconvenience.

He had been at the same public school with Murray and Stanley, and they had continued friends from then. Vernon was very partial to Murray, his calm yet fanciful and metaphorical reasoning had great effect upon Frederic's sensitive feelings ; Stanley's more manly, but too often harsh and sarcastic remarks hurt and annoyed him. In his merry, careless hours, he could retort and laugh at the half-misanthropical philosophy of Stanley ; but when disappointment or perplexity overwhelmed him, he hurried to seek consolation and advice from Murray, who always soothed his annoyance even if he could give him no more substantial assistance.

He was rather susceptible to the charms of young ladies, and had fancied himself in love many times ; but these evanescent affairs had been slight hallucinations of his imagination, more than any real entanglement of the feelings.

As he returned to the Club, after parting with the Harcourts, he threw himself upon the sofa, for he was sadly given to lounging, and indulged his fancy in all kinds of vagaries, mingling reminiscences of the glowing skies, the huge spreading forests, and all the gorgeous beauty of the East, with fairy-like visions ; and we will not deny that perhaps some of the inmates of his cloud-land wore an aspect not very unlike that of Adeline Harcourt.

All that bright, hot summer afternoon, Vernon lay in this listless inactivity, without even turning over the newspapers which were scattered on the table near him ; and when the cool evening breeze, breathed through the room, and spoke of the close of day, he roused himself, with something like a pang of reproach, for such a waste of time, and joined some military friends who had come in to dine, after riding and sauntering in the Park.

Frederic was soon the merriest of the party, the life of all the wit and fun that was going on in that party of objectless, idle men. Happy are those who have daily duties which are imperative, strong interests and responsibilities to arouse them ; for the sternest tension of the moral and intellectual powers, the most constant labour, is

far preferable to the dissipation of all the high qualities and capabilities with which we are endowed. If a man will not make employment and duties for himself, it will be fortunate for him if a stern necessity should wake him from his apathy, or real misfortune arouse his sympathies, before his faculties are crushed by indolence and *ennui*.

## CHAPTER VII.

When day hath glided to her rosy bower,  
And twilight comes, the poet's witching hour,  
And dreamlike language from the soft-ton'd wind  
With pensive cadence charms the list'ning mind,  
When Nature's beauty, cloth'd with dewy light,  
Melts on the heart like music through the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

And not in vain, voluptuous eventide,  
Thy dappled clouds along the horizon glide,  
For oh! while heaven and earth grow dumb with bliss,  
In homage to an hour divine as this,  
Thoughts of ethereal beauty spring to birth,  
And waft the soul beyond the dreams of earth.

R. MONTGOMERY.

How delightful it is to escape from London,  
—from its hot, noisy streets, and crowded parks,  
to breathe the pure air and fresh breezes of the  
country! How beautiful the foliage looks,  
how enchantingly the waters glance in the eyes

of one who has been involved in the whirl of a London season !

No wonder people try to arrange pic-nics to Hampton Court, expeditions to Windsor, or even dinners at Greenwich ; even the most determined votaries of fashion long to enjoy an attempt at rurality as the bright summer days roll on, and weariness and lassitude creep on them after the long-continued fatigue of nightly dissipation.

Then visions of thy loveliness, classic Richmond, steal over the imagination ; the deep shadow of the hoary trees in thy beautiful Park, the solitude of its sequestered glades, the silvery course of the flowing river, with its emerald banks clothed in the richest woods, the pretty villas dotting the verdant landscape, the hazy blue of the distant hills, the elastic purity of the wooing air, all the beauty which has been so plentifully showered upon thee, comes to haunt the inmate of the sultry and exciting town.

It strikes some enterprising character that a party assembled to spend the day in the lovely quietness of Richmond would prove successful ; when balls and dinners are getting wearisome, then the change to a little morning dissipation is hailed with enthusiastic delight. But then comes the difficulty of arrangements ; the various

plans suggested of the merits of a cold luncheon, or a sumptuous dinner ; of a water excursion, or an early drive ; of the style of toilettes ; the annoyance of disappointments ; the chance of uncertain and unpropitious weather, that most important element in the enjoyment of out-of-door pleasures, and over which we have no control.

The summer was at its full height, every tree in its brightest beauty, when Mrs. Brandon, the gayest of the Harcourts' acquaintance, set afloat the scheme of a pic-nic to Richmond. She and her daughters were hurrying from house to house, to collect an efficient party for carrying out the idea effectually, for such a plan must not be delayed, or the important presence of the sun cannot be depended upon.

Their first care was to prevail on Mrs. Colston to join them, for her good-nature, and extensive acquaintance were useful auxiliaries ; she consented to their proposal, provided her young friends, Marion and Adeline, would accompany her. She was entreated to bring as large a party as possible ; and pleased with her acquiescence, the Brandons proceeded on their visiting mission.

They were elegant, pretty-looking girls, always well dressed, and ready for amusement of any

sort ; with the *prestige* of being likely to possess fortunes, great was the attention they received from the world, but for vain, thoughtless, selfish beings as they were, this homage was their ruin ; they built their happiness upon a sandy foundation and fluttered on, bent upon self-gratification, till they became careless and hollow-hearted.

Marion and Adeline were delighted at the prospect of a long day in the country ; they had made expeditions in past years with their sketch-books and flower-baskets, and recollecting the pleasure of those summer days, fancied something of such simple amusements were to come again. Little did they understand the details of a pic-nic formed with all the elements of London society !

It was with much surprise they heard of transparent muslins and lace bonnets being considered the appropriate toilettes. They were disappointed at the lateness of the hour fixed for meeting ; instead of spending a long day in the park, they were not expected to leave town until the afternoon ; however, they determined to enjoy themselves ; and although the plan was very different to what they had originally pictured, they anticipated great pleasure.

Mrs. Colston took them in her light, open



carriage, and I occupied the fourth corner. We had a merry drive, although the sun was pouring down its burning rays upon us, and the dust floating in the scarcely-stirring air, by no means improvements to our position ; however, young people make light of such little annoyances, particularly when they are joyous with anticipated pleasure. Many were the laughing proposals I received that I would let them give me a veil to protect me from the dust, and many condolences were made on the state of my coat ; however, when we arrived at the hotel where we had arranged to meet, such little matters were soon adjusted, before we went into the garden to join the rest of the party, very few of whom had yet appeared.

The Brandons were there with a few gentlemen, laughing and using all their powers to charm. I could not help contrasting their gay and almost ball-room attire, the bright silk mantles, and elaborate capotes, with the quiet, simple, silvery-grey dress, and the light straw bonnet, with its pale green ribbons, which Marion wore, or even with the more striking, but still quiet elegance of Adeline's appearance.

We lounged about, watching the people arrive.

It was a pretty scene : the garden with its

stone vases glittering with the showy blossoms of the scarlet verberna ; the steps descending to the lawn below, bordered with a profusion of roses and pinks, and fragrant mignonette ; the tiny fountain in the centre, dropping into the carved basin, in which the gold fish were sporting and gleaming in the sunshine ; the rustic seats beneath the drooping ash ; the sweet scent of the shady lime-trees, with the groups of gaily dressed ladies wandering about with their cavaliers at their side ; the hum of gentle voices, the silvery laugh, all combined to make an enchanting effect.

We were leaning over the balustrade, gazing upon the lovely panorama which spread itself at our feet, when Adeline, who I am afraid was more intent upon the promenaders than upon the landscape, announced some fresh arrivals. On the top of the steps stood Stanley, Murray and Captain Vernon, surveying the animated scene. I saw they soon recognized us, and after speaking to the Brandons, Captain Vernon hastily crossed the lawn to meet us : he and Adeline were soon in full flow of merry chat. Murray also joined us, and expatiated upon the exquisite beauty before us. Stanley lingered longer with the Brandons than his friends had done, not that he was more indifferent to the

Harcourts' society—a few weeks before and he might have sought them with as much eagerness as Vernon had showed—but now that his feelings were more deeply interested, he almost hesitated to indulge them.

He stood near, feeling the pleasure of Marion's presence, watching every change on his countenance as she talked to Murray, whose philosophical indifference to so much sweetness he could not comprehend.

Marion was rather puzzled at Stanley's not coming to speak. She felt half sorry, not that she fancied he was standing there because he was so very much pleased with Florence Brandon, or because he had not noticed our presence; perhaps she had a slight feeling of disappointment, for the thought of meeting Stanley had been a cause of her anticipated pleasure.

She glanced half timidly towards him, but meeting his eye, turned away with a faint blush to continue her conversation with Murray; that look brought Stanley to her side. The step once taken, he wondered at his folly in having suffered himself to delay it.

“What a bore that Florence Brandon is, waylaying one in the style to which I have been a victim,” he said, as he shook hands with Marion, “it really was a trial of patience to

listen to her sleepy nonentities, when one's friends were near."

"I fancied you seemed much amused," replied Marion. "Mr. Murray was saying he had never seen you look so interested; and as for Florence being insipid, that is a matter of taste, for some people consider her very amusing."

"You should see Stanley sometimes, Miss Harcourt, when any particularly fashionable belle is his partner: while she is talking of all the light subjects adapted to ball-room gossip, his frozen look of abstraction, or ill-concealed sneer is worth something; you are no judge of his real character, for he can play the amiable sometimes."

"Are we to remain in this garden until dinner-time?" asked Marion, looking at her watch, "we have at least an hour and a half. I should like so much to go into the Park; let us ask Mrs. Colston if she will go with us, it would be far cooler and pleasanter than it is here."

Mrs. Colston readily consented, provided Adeline would come too. Murray offered to seek her. She was bending over the basin, watching the fish playing in the sparkling water, and letting the spray from the fountain fall upon her hands, as she listened to Vernon's

description of the gorgeousness of the East, to which he had been accustomed, and half pleased with the sentiment he mingled with his relation. Here Murray found her, and was not displeased with the office of bringing her to us ; however, Vernon did not leave her, so we made a pleasant party for our proposed stroll.

We left the garden by a tiny gate which led immediately into the Park, and after taking a turn upon the terrace, we went into the less frequented paths. Murray managed to retain his place by Adeline, and engaged her in conversation. Vernon joined Mrs. Colston and me, and amused us by his merry chat.

“ Who are these Brandons ?” he asked. “ They are rather dashing looking people ; plenty of money, of course ?”

“ Mr. Brandon’s father was a merchant in an enormous business, and left his son well off ; and he, by marrying an heiress, has very much increased his fortune. He is considered a very rich man ; his daughters are looked upon as ‘ catches ’ I assure you ; and they really would not be disagreeable girls, if they were not so spoiled by adulation ; but they fancy they have only to dance once with a man, to secure his lasting admiration and regards.”

“ Well, I think a *lac* of rupees would be

necessary to make them go down: don't fancy I intend a pun, but a *lack* of them might have the same effect. Stanley was talking about them to me last night, and in his cool, sarcastic way was describing them; he says, they are excessively proper in some things, matters of etiquette or appearance for instance, and yet will unhesitatingly do what people who set up for less would shrink from."

"You must not believe Mr. Stanley's strictures to their full extent, or I fear you will have but a poor opinion of any one, he is so very severe, especially with young ladies."

"Well, but these Brandons certainly have an air of great *hauteur*. I should not like to ask one of them to be my partner for a valse. Can you fancy any one asking them to be his partner for an indefinite period? Imagine the ladylike disdain he would meet with, if he happened to be rather short, or not of a *distingué* appearance, or, perchance, an unfortunate younger son like myself."

Then the Captain curled up his mouth, and put on a look which reminded me so strongly of Florence Brandon, that I could not refrain from a hearty laugh, and the assurance that he looked extremely like a young lady on the point of giving a most decided negative.

“We were at the Tottenhams last night,” Vernon continued; “and I heard Stanley say, in pathetic tones, to Murray, that he was sure it would drive him mad if he were obliged to look at Lucy Brandon all his life. I know he was thinking of what a total want of expression there was in her countenance, and then her drawling voice which distracts poor Edward.”

“How grave Adeline is looking. What can Mr. Murray be talking about?” said I.

“Oh, he is moralizing, or telling some dreadfully cruel case of one of his friends being jilted by some young lady, I’ll bet. I shall go and make a diversion, it is a shame for him to have Miss Adeline all to himself. Here is a splendid long fern-leaf. I shall take that to show her, it will be a good excuse for interrupting Murray’s serious lecture.”

Captain Vernon gathered the leaf, and turned to display it to Adeline, and by this manœuvre established himself by her side. Murray found he had no chance against Vernon’s wild nonsense, so he offered his arm to Mrs. Colston, who was getting rather fatigued.

Marion and Stanley had paused so often to admire the lovely glades and vistas which constantly appeared that they were some little

distance behind, sauntering slowly on as if rather absorbed in thought; for they had not talked much, he was content to enjoy the loveliness which surrounded him, and to hear Marion's few words in her gentle voice: he felt as if in a sweet dream, and seemed almost to fear that speaking would disturb its serenity. She was not more inclined for conversation; happy, she scarcely knew why; but with a subdued, tender feeling which the calm beauty of Nature inspires, and which the half melancholy of her companion increased.

We heard a distant clock striking, and found we must hurry back or we should be late for dinner; however, by means of a short cut across the Park, we reached the hotel before it was announced.

"What a fortunate proposal yours was, Miss Harcourt: we have had a pleasant stroll and escaped the infectious dulness which seems to have crept over the rest of the party," said Murray.

"I thought it was a great pity to waste such a glorious afternoon in walking round and round this space, to make remarks, and hear satire upon our friends, which might be done equally well in any ball-room. Judging from their ap-



pearance they do not seem to have found much amusement."

An air of restraint did indeed hang over the people, many of whom were strangers to each other, and who had not the tact or courage to commence an acquaintance; however, just as poor Mrs. Brandon seemed overwhelmed with despair at seeing anything like cordial sociability arise, dinner was announced. This gave employment, some point of mutual interest; and by the time we were all assembled in the dining-room, a buzz of conversation and merry laughter might be heard. The tables were arranged down both sides of the room, and across one end; and very prettily they looked with the cold collation spread upon them, decorated with flowers, and the glass jugs of various forms containing iced beverages standing among them. The breeze from the river blew in at the open window, and made the air cool and refreshing.

It was amusing to see the manœuvres about the places at dinner, the fascinating glances and smiles given to induce gentlemen to place themselves beside certain young ladies; the Brandons were anxious to secure Captain Vernon, for they were girls for whom a moustache has irre-

sistible charms ; however, he offered his arm to Adeline, and Murray contrived to seat himself on the other side. Lucy Brandon placed herself next him, but I fear she did not receive much of his attention, for he and Vernon seemed engaged in a species of rivalry, who should obtain most of Adeline's regard.

I had seldom seen her look better : the air of languid *hauteur* which occasionally rested upon her fine features had vanished, and an expression of interest and spirit had superseded it ; she was entertaining both her cavaliers, and scattering her smiles with great profusion.

Stanley had taken Marion to dinner ; they were seated nearly opposite to this merry trio. I saw Marion's kind nod to Adeline across the table, and the pleasure she felt in seeing her so amused. The dreamy pleasure Stanley had enjoyed in the Park, was destroyed by the change of scene ; he readily entered into conversation, his remarks were keen and severe, and all he said seemed dashed with his old views of suspicion and distrust.

Marion felt annoyed and sad ; she could not comprehend the effect of such a man's awaking from the associations of his afternoon's reveries, and finding himself surrounded by the glare and vanity of society which he despised and detested.

She saw the sneering smile, and heard the mocking voice which accompanied his words, and wondered how he could be so different. She looked so sadly thoughtful, that it struck Murray.

“You look tired, Miss Harcourt. Take a glass of wine with me. You walked too far.”

“No, I am not fatigued, I enjoyed our ramble so very much; but all this noise bores me.”

She gave him one of her bright smiles as she raised her glass to her lips, and he thought for a moment that he almost preferred it to the brilliancy of Adeline’s countenance, although it was beaming beside him in all the richness of beauty which he so idolised. After dinner the ladies went into the garden, and we could hear their voices as we sat near the windows; we soon joined them, for there had been some idea started of rowing in the evening.

The sun was rapidly sinking; but the air was so calm and warm, that few objections were made about the prudence of such a proposal. The ladies fetched their shawls, and we all went to the river. Boats were soon found, and after some little difficulty about filling them, most of the young people were rowing down the river.

The twilight was gently stealing over the distance, a few stars appeared in the sky, and the pale moon rose behind the thick masses of trees on the banks of the rippling stream—all breathed stillness and tranquillity. Marion had been talking with some gentlemen just as the embarkation had been arranged, and by some means Stanley could not find a place in the boat in which she sat; however, he went in the one in which were Murray and Adeline, Vernon and one of the Brandons.

Murray soon found out how the matter stood, and calling out to a gentleman in the other boat:

“Vansittart, come into our boat; we are going to have some glees, and want you to take the tenor. Stanley can’t or won’t sing; he will not mind changing places with you.”

The boats were pulled alongside, and the proposed change was made. Stanley sat down by Marion, with a feeling of great satisfaction. She slightly coloured as he said:

“What a blessing that fellow possesses a voice! I never appreciated the benefit of a musical acquaintance before.”

“Is it not a lovely evening? I do enjoy it so much, it feels so calm and peaceful! It will

do you good, Mr. Stanley ; you seemed very—what shall I say?—cross at dinner.”

“ I did feel very savage, I must confess ; all those odious people, their absurdities and nonsense disgusted me ; it was so tiresome to leave that beautiful Park just to sit as if we were at a London dinner. Those Brandons have no idea of a real country day.”

“ But everything went off very satisfactorily ; you must not expect such a large party to be exempt from all follies ; they would be more than human ; you must make allowances for trifles. At all events, it is paying them too high a compliment to let them disturb your composure.”

“ You must think me very ridiculous to care about such things ; but sometimes they jar upon one’s feelings more than at others, and to-day I was not in the humour to bear them ; but, as you say, this calm evening does me good : I have forgotten all disagreeables. Listen to Vansittart’s serenade ; how well his voice sounds in the distance ! I do enjoy music in this way.”

“ So do I. Ah ! I recognize Adeline’s voice ; how clear and sweet it is to-night ! That is my favourite *barcarolle*.”

Stanley made no reply ; he leant forward, so as he could see Marion's countenance, while she listened to the songs, and he felt all restless sensations hushed into perfect tranquillity, as he sat beside her, and saw the shadows of evening deepen around them. The music died away in the distance, the moon's bright ray began to glisten on the tiny wavelets ; and when the breeze sprang up with increased freshness, Stanley rousing himself from his silence, said in a voice which thrilled to Marion's heart :

"Let me put this shawl over you ; you must be chilly, for the dew is falling. Nay, do not refuse."

As he threw it round her, his hand touched hers ; he could not resist one gentle pressure, before he finally arranged the plaid to his satisfaction. He sank back in his former silence, but struck by her deep thoughtfulness, he bent towards her, and asked her in a low voice :

"What are you thinking of ? You are not wearied, I hope, with all you have done ? You look pale, or is it the moonlight which casts such a cold reflection over you ?"

She gave him such a sweet, confiding look, as she replied, that he felt as if he could have thrown himself at her feet in gratitude.

“No, I am not tired, perhaps a little sad ; why or wherefore, I know not. This undulating motion makes one feel dreamy ! I never remember such a delicious evening—it compensates for any annoyance one may have experienced for months. Could you not fancy such moments are granted us, that we may have courage to struggle on through the vexations and troubles of earth, by giving us some idea of the calm happiness of heaven ?”

“I can scarcely imagine greater happiness than I feel now,” was the whispered answer ; and then the boat touched the shore, and we joined the rest of the party, who were hastily disembarking and hurrying back to the hotel, to take off their bonnets before the dancing commenced, which was to finish the evening. After a short time we all reassembled in the ball-room, and the merry polkas and inspiring vales were heard, the young people danced away for several hours with great spirit.

I saw Murray's eyes fixed on Marion, as if to assure himself of the state of affairs between her and Stanley, but her calm manner baffled even his penetration ; and as Arthur, who dreaded anything like a public display of his feelings, scarcely danced with her, he could

catch no idea from him. Adeline was still in the full flow of exuberant spirits, she whirled on with unflagging activity.

I saw her hand on Stanley's shoulder in the last valse, for he had been dancing with her, that he might indulge himself with talking of Marion. At last the carriages drew up, and we took farewell of each other, and enveloping ourselves in cloaks and shawls, prepared for our homeward drive.

Vernon offered Adeline his pea-jacket as a protection from the night-air, which she laughingly declined. Stanley drew Marion's shawl carefully over her, as she leant from the carriage to bid him good-night, with her long hair drooping over her face.



## CHAPTER VIII.

But in the temper of the invisible mind,  
The godlike and undying intellect,  
There are distinctions which will live in heaven  
When Time is a forgotten circumstance.

\* \* \* \* \*

And as the angels differ, will the ken  
Of gifted spirits glorify Him more.

N. P. WILLIS.

“Do the Harcourts ever walk here?” asked Vernon, as he was lounging in Kensington Gardens, one afternoon with Murray.

“Yes, very frequently, but not often when the band plays, for Adeline told me she had not heard it once this season; however, as they will leave town shortly, it is not unlikely they will

come to-day ; they are uncommonly nice people, are they not ?”

“I like the girls very much, especially Adeline, and the father seems a quiet, kind old gentleman enough ; but to tell you the truth, the old lady rather alarms me, she is so fussy. I am afraid of proposing anything, or saying anything, for fear of her disapproving. Murray, do fancy her in the country, she would be in a constant worry : if a cloud appeared, a thunder-storm would be anticipated ; or if the breeze were at all fresh, a hurricane must be the result ; and then all the directions and prohibitions, they would utterly spoil every pleasure.”

“She does try every one by these teasing anxieties ; but I believe they all proceed from over-fondness and care : it is a great pity. I like her very much in many ways, but I would rather not live in the same house with her, for constant irritation is more than men can put up with. She is certainly the best antidote to the softer emotions that I know, for her remarks quickly dispel them, or, at all events, counteract their dangerous tendency ; for nothing prevents

one's feelings getting interested so much as the discussion or intrusion of the petty cares and vexations of life. A great sorrow, or a real struggle, may increase and strengthen, or even create love; for according to my theory, deep emotions rather promote that passion, but daily crosses and tiresome follies are its greatest enemies, particularly in its early stages."

"Well, it may be so, but I always fancy love should soothe all annoyances and sweeten all cares."

"So it will, Fred, if it be that love which 'beareth all things and hopeth all things,' but when do you find such? Unless love be unselfish, pure and noble, believe me, it will not be unruffled by all the bitter experience it must meet with."

"The love I have pictured, would disregard all these things, or extract their sting by its own sweetness. I do not pretend to know all the little intricacies of the heart as you do, and I am rather glad I do not share your initiation; I like my own fancies better, and hope they may prove realities. As for Stanley's suspicions of women, his doubts about their capabilities of

true affection, they are the most cold-blooded opinions I ever heard of: I would not feel as he does for worlds."

"I think, just now, Arthur seems in rather a fluctuating state of mind; he is fascinated by Marion Harcourt, and sometimes yields himself to her sweet influence, then his old misgivings cross him, and he is wretched. I saw all this the other day at Richmond, particularly during dinner. Marion does not quite understand him, his bitter sarcasms hurt her. I am sorry for her, but she is nearly the only girl I know, who could convince Stanley that he is wrong in his views."

"Oh, he will soon tell a different tale; let him see a little more of her, he has not known her long."

"With most men you would be right, but Arthur considers everything so very acutely, that I do not feel quite sure of the result: if he were once attached to Marion, the die cast, he would be an altered man; it is just what his character wants. I hope that will be the end, for both their sakes; for, with the exception of this mistrustful tendency, Stanley is a capital

fellow, and Marion would make him as happy as a man dare hope to be."

"I am sure he would like much better to have a home, than to be at clubs and in chambers; he is not at all suited for such a mode of life, quite different to me, for I think it is very amusing; not but what a pretty, good-natured wife would be a very pleasant addition to one's belongings!"

"I wonder you did not get married in India, Vernon. I hear there are plenty of nice girls there: it seems rather a fashionable investment for young ladies, to ship them for the colonies."

"Ah! but I was up the country nearly all the time I was there, so I had no chance of seeing these people; and, another thing, I rather fancied the idea of seeing England before I took such an important step. I am very glad I came home free, particularly as I have obtained my troop, I can retire when I choose without appearing very whimsical."

"There is Mrs. Denby, is she not handsome? I wonder what the lace on her cloak cost: no trifle, I'll bet, she is awfully extra-

vagant. Her husband is on our circuit, a very good fellow, and in capital practice; and so he ought to be, for with his young family, expenses must be heavy and increasing. She had not a farthing, but that is always the way—those women who have never been accustomed to spend money, throw it away the most carelessly when they get hold of it. The Denbys are very gay, indeed, I believe she would be wretched without it: she is to be seen everywhere. He absolutely spoils her, and is persuaded to do things, of which I know he disapproves.”

“What a fool he must be! She is far too showily dressed and too handsome to be walking in this crowd with only that girl; does she fancy herself a *chaperone*, I wonder? I have often seen her about, has she any children?”

“I scarcely know—yes, I think I have heard Denby speak of his nursery department, but she is never guilty of such a domestic allusion; in fact, she is just the kind of woman one cannot fancy playing the *rôle* of mother. I declare I could almost as easily imagine her in her

husband's wig and gown, as bending over a cradle, and hushing an infant to sleep."

"What a horror! I am not particularly fond of squalling children, or of listening to details of cutting teeth, or of the wonders of some prodigy; but, by George! I would much rather a woman should be guilty of a fault in manners, and bore me a little with such things, than see her so utterly indifferent to them as that Mrs. Denby must be, by your description. Such women are rarities, for though they are often careless and selfish, they are seldom so utterly indifferent. What does Stanley think of her? Now she deserves some of his sarcasms."

"He scarcely knows her; her appearance is enough for him, she is got up far too elaborately, far too regardless of expense to agree with his ideas of simple elegance; and then she is too demonstrative in her manners, dances too well, which, as you know, is a very possible fault in a lady, and starts rather questionable objections on morality occasionally. I believe she thinks it pleases young men to appear very unprejudiced, very free from the

conventionalities which society has established ; but I could tell her, nothing disgusts us more, than to see a woman condescending to our opinions, lowering herself to our standard of propriety, instead of raising it to a higher tone."

"I am sure that is true: one does not like to think that women can lose that bright innocence, and unsullied purity of mind, for which we love them; and yet if they will talk as some of them do, what are we to believe?"

"After all, we are to blame, for we do all we can to spoil them—we encourage their follies, and then laugh at their conceit; and when they are stamped with worldliness, we are the first to blame and ridicule them."

"It is a shame, but they so kindly help us on, that we cannot refrain from indulging in the game."

"I am afraid I have done it very often, but I begin to think over some of my follies with a little regret. Here come the Harcourts. Adeline is not looking so well as usual; but fancy her wearing pale blue, the very worst



colour she could choose. I shall attack Marion about it."

Vernon was soon between Adeline and Marion, while Murray walked with Mrs. Harcourt.

"What a motley crowd this is—a sprinkling of all sorts, I do not much like it," said Adeline. "Look at all those foreigners, how I do dislike to see such specimens of humanity."

"You have never been abroad, Miss Adeline, or you would have been accustomed to the monkeys; but that group is certainly very grotesque, those fellows seem to think it necessary to make themselves look as much like ruffians as possible when they come to England."

"I think the band quite spoils the gardens, it attracts so many people; and one is scarcely repaid, for we hear very little music, and that is none of the best. We seldom ever come, but Adeline had a fancy for it this afternoon; and we shall not have many more opportunities, for we are going out of town very soon," said Marion

“ So I hear : I am so sorry. I hate breaking up the season, it is such a chance whether one meets again ; or, at all events, in such pleasant circumstances. Where are you going ? ”

“ To Fenton. We hear it is a most lovely place and very quiet, so that we shall be able to be quite independent, and wander about all day.”

“ I know some people who live near ; there is some tolerable shooting in the neighbourhood. I recollect going there when I was a boy, long before I went to India. I hope you are good climbers, for I assure you the hills are no trifles, and the roads are execrable ; however, if you care about wild, romantic scenery, you will be charmed.”

“ It will be quite delightful to us, for it is some time since we were in a very retired place, and we enjoy the country extremely.”

“ You must leave all your London finery behind, for the rocks and brambles will soon reduce it to tatters ; and then it must be a bore for ladies to trouble themselves much about dress in the country. You must take your

habits, for many of the prettiest views are beyond a walk."

The path was rather crowded at this moment, and, as our party turned, Mrs. Harcourt paused to speak to Vernon, when Murray detached himself from her, and joined Marion.

"Do you intend going to the Corries to-night? You must not play truant just at the *finale*."

"Yes, we intend going; it will be our last act of dissipation this season, so our appearance is voted an imperative duty."

"You talk of going away with such indifference, that I am afraid you do not care for all the regret your departure will cause."

"Now, Mr. Murray, do not you condescend to make pretty speeches. I had hoped you knew me too well, to think they pleased me; and I will do you the justice to believe that you find saying them quite an effort. I am rather sorry to leave town, but the heat and hurry have quite wearied me; this lovely weather makes one long for the freedom of the country. Are you not looking forward to the long vacation

with something of the feeling of schoolboys anticipating their holidays?"

"Many of us are, I assure you: our friend Stanley among others, for he has but little recreation during term. I left him this afternoon in court, engaged in a heavy case, when I know he was quite envying me my privilege of idleness, and he would have done still more so had he known how fortunate I was fated to be."

"Mr. Stanley is a puzzle to me—he is so different at different times. Is he really as suspicious and misanthropical as he endeavours to paint himself?"

"Stanley has very deep rather than quick feelings, and when they are concerned he is very jealous and distrustful. When he is longing to have them appreciated and understood, he shrinks back, from the fear of being deceived or miscomprehended, as one may fancy a thirsty man denying himself the luxury of a draught of cold water, from the fear of its being poisoned; this peculiarity has prevented his forming connections, which would have afforded him great pleasure. I can scarcely understand such a

feeling, for I think, in the majority of men, good greatly predominates over evil. I do not mean that Stanley suspects people of intentions of defrauding and of deceiving him—no, it is only that he is so fearful of not having a sufficient return for his feelings. Have I given you any help in your study of his character?”

“Not much, I am afraid. I cannot understand such excessive refinement upon motives, and I hope I never may, for real friendship, according to my ideas, has no room for doubts.”

“And, of course, in real love, there is still less place for them?”

“There they ought to be unknown—there should be perfect confidence, unshaken faith between those who are united by the everlasting bond of a true attachment, let the circumstances be ever so peculiar. I believe I should never allow a misgiving to cross my mind, for if I once esteemed any one sufficiently to love them as a woman will love, I could never doubt them.”

Murray was silent a few moments, and then added :

“I wish you could impart this feeling to Stanley, he would be a much happier man.”

Marion made no reply to this speech, but began speaking of Vernon, with whom she was much pleased. Murray was watching him, as he turned towards Adeline, his bright eye now dancing with merriment, and now expressive of feeling. He certainly looked a very handsome, distinguished fellow, as he strolled under the flickering shade of the lofty trees, with Mrs. Harcourt leaning on his arm, and Adeline walking by his side; she, notwithstanding the unbecoming colour of her bonnet, appearing very charming and animated, playing with her lace parasol, and tossing it about in a way peculiar to herself, and which at one time expressed excited pleasure, and at another haughty *insouciance*.

There was a slight frown on Murray's brow, as he saw the bright smile which beamed on Adeline's countenance as she turned towards Captain Vernon, and which had sometimes greeted him. Men are naturally so intensely jealous, that it annoys them terribly to see a

woman, for whom they have felt the most trivial regard, distinguish another man by looks of pleased interest. And Murray had been more fascinated by Adeline than he was quite aware of, or was willing to allow even to himself; an ardent admirer of beauty, her expressive and almost Eastern style, was the one that always captivated him most completely.

“Vernon and your sister seem to suit famously. She quite cuts her old friends now,” he said, with a slight shade of bitterness in his voice. “I am afraid she is verifying Stanley’s prediction, by becoming a flirt.”

“No, you must not say that, Mr. Murray. Captain Vernon is very attentive to Adeline, and seems to take pleasure in her society; she has no reason to dislike him. Why should she be affected and ridiculous, and avoid him? You spoke so highly of the Captain, that, at first, I think she valued him from your description; she took his good qualities on account, as it were; not but what we soon liked him for himself, he is so very sociable and open-hearted, that one soon feels as if he were an old friend,

instead of an acquaintance of only a few months' standing. Do you not think one gets more at home with some people in a far shorter time, than you do with others? that they are more easily understood, more calculated to make a quicker impression?"

"Certainly, they seem to develope themselves before one, as the rapid vegetation of the tropics springs to luxuriance; Vernon is one of these people I know. As a boy he was always apt in acquiring friends, and he retains them, which is not always the case with those who have the facility of making acquaintance. No! I do not wonder at your sister being pleased with him, he has everything in his favour."

"It does not follow that he would strike every one in the same way. Adeline is most easily impressed by a demonstrative character—by one who would influence her by making an effort to do so. She is rather languid and dreamy herself, and the more energetic and impetuous another is, the more she likes them. The old story of contrasts, you see!"

"I comprehend you. How strange it is,



that those whose dispositions assimilate, never get attached to each other ; it seems as if a few differences were necessary to cement the union. Indeed, nothing can be more insipid than constant similarity in opinions ; a little variety, which exercises forbearance, self-denial and temper, gives interest to life, by keeping the feelings and faculties bright."

"May not all this give a better reason for Adeline's being pleased with Captain Vernon, than the mere love of admiration, or the odious vanity of gaining his regard just as a triumph?"

"Yes, it may, and I will believe it is so, though still I think there is a little of that same vanity lurking in the corner of her heart ; but if it be never more developed than it now is, no great harm will be done."

"I think we ought to be talking of turning homewards, or we shall be late for dinner, which would annoy my father. We will tell that merry trio the hour. Perhaps they will condescend to think of such a sublunary event as the dinner-hour."

The carriage was soon drawn up, and as the

young ladies stepped in, several little promises about dances in the evening were extorted. Vernon claimed the first valse with Adeline. She smiled her assent as the carriage drove off.

It was a gay ball to which the Harcourts went that evening. It was late before they entered, and most of the party had already assembled. Vernon soon appeared to claim Adeline for the promised valse, and Murray appropriated Marion, rather to Stanley's disgust, as he had been waiting in the hope of securing her for the first dance.

Mrs. Harcourt found her way to a comfortable sofa in the dancing room, and sat there amusing herself by looking on the animated scene! Chaperones ought to receive great praise for the exemplary patience with which they perform their arduous duties! Seated for hours together, night after night, in hot, crowded rooms, wearied and neglected, with but few to talk to, their only interest is to be found in sympathizing in the pleasure of the young beating hearts around them, in recollecting

their own youthful days, and in looking forward to the future of others.

Stanley went to Marion as soon as the dance was over, and laughingly called upon Murray to resign his partner, very quietly transferring her to his own arm.

“I understood you were in the gardens this afternoon. It was so fine that I quite longed to get away from court, and enjoy the shady coolness of the trees. I do not know when I felt business so irksome; the counsel seemed so tedious, and the judge gave us such a long speech, that I felt quite impatient. Murray was a lucky fellow—I quite envied his freedom.”

“That is what one must pay for distinction. You cannot arrange for briefs to come just as you wish. I thought you were not one to regret a little confinement or inconvenience if any real good were to be gained, or any views forwarded. I always fancied your ambition would impel you onwards, at whatever sacrifice of minor gratifications.”

“It has done so hitherto. I have worked

sometimes for the sake of overcoming difficulties, for the excitement of triumphing, for the sake of rising in the scale of estimation. I have enjoyed the keen struggle of intellect, and felt my heart swell with pride at success; but there are higher, purer sources of happiness, calmer, holier feelings to rejoice in, and I am beginning to understand them: hopes far sweeter than visions of worldly aggrandisement have fanned me with their bright pinions; dreams of a life have haunted me, tinged with better prospects than the wool-sack or the judge's robe. Cannot you understand that I might think a stroll in Kensington Gardens, under some circumstances, far more agreeable than being successful in a doubtful trial?"

"Yes, I can easily imagine pleasanter things than your professional duties, even when flushed with the proudest triumphs, things in which the heart can be satisfied as well as the intellect; but then women feel so differently to men about such things!"

"Do you then fancy we are only capable of carrying out and arranging details of business, or engaging in strife and contention, that we

have no appreciation of calm, peaceful happiness? How mistaken you are! You will know better some day, I hope."

Marion's eye fell beneath the deep, earnest gaze Stanley bent upon her. The impassioned tone of his voice which had so often sounded coldly and sarcastically upon her ear agitated her, and her hand slightly trembled when he took it, as they returned to the dance.

Silently they whirled round in the valse, his imagination picturing life with far deeper interests than had dawned on him before, and her heart throbbing with emotions, to which it had hitherto been a stranger. Onward they went, until they were arrested by the sudden cessation of the music; she leant on his arm for a moment with a feeling of weariness, he then led her to take an ice. In the refreshment-room they found Adeline and Murray chatting with great interest. It was rather a relief to Stanley to meet with some friend who would interrupt his *tête-à-tête* with Marion, for he felt that in another interview he might not be able to keep himself under such control as he wished for the present to do;—ardent, passionate words would present them-

selves to him, would feel rushing on for utterance, but then reason said wait, see more of her—do not be in a hurry—and to avoid the influence of his feelings, he gladly hailed the presence of others as a species of distraction from them.

A half perceptible smile crossed Murray's lip as he saw them enter, for Marion's cheek was still brightly flushed, and a sweet happy look on her brow, which told much to his experienced eye, and the peculiar expression on Stanley's countenance assured him that his hitherto impenetrable heart was rapidly surrendering itself to the gentle whisperings of love.

The four stood talking together for some time, till Mrs. Harcourt joined them, accompanied by Captain Vernon, and saying it was late, wished to go home. Shawls were soon found, and while Adeline was laughing and talking to her cavalier, Stanley placed Marion's cloak on her shoulders, and whispered as he offered his arm :

“ You will not forget this ball, the last of the season? We may not meet for some months, but think sometimes of this evening with your

dear, kind feelings ; and when I am again fortunate enough to see you, let me flatter myself, you do not regard me as a mere every-day acquaintance."

Marion's eyes were slightly clouded by a tear, as she looked an answer ; the pale, cold morning twilight was yet dim, as they entered the carriage, and something of its dark, shadowy influence seemed to hang over Stanley as he watched them drive away ; while he was with Marion all seemed bright and true ; but when she vanished, he appeared to fall back into his old sea of doubt and misgiving. The cure was only commenced, far from completion, time only could effect it permanently.

## CHAPTER IX.

There's beauty in the soft warm summer morn,  
When leaves are sparkling with the early dew,  
When birds awake, and buds and flowers are born ;  
And the rich sun appears, half trembling through  
The crimson haze, and dim harmonious azure blend  
Of the far eastern heav'ns. There's beauty deep  
From mountain tops to catch the distant view  
Of quiet glen, wood-path, wild craggy steep,  
Or cool sequester'd coast, where lonely waters sleep.

CHARLES SWAIN.

It was a bright morning, when the Harcourts found themselves on the railroad, whirling onwards at a most rapid rate by the express train ; they passed rich expanses of country, villages, towns, beautiful houses, and isolated cottages with such speed that they could scarcely catch a



glimpse of them. After about three hours' drive, they reached the termination of the steam part of their journey. While the carriage was being packed, and the horses put to, they strolled about the curious old town, where the station was situated ; they had time to visit one or two of the fine churches, for which the place is celebrated, and then hastened to meet the carriage.

The bustle of a railway-terminus is overwhelming ; porters, baggage, barrows and guards hurrying backwards and forwards, passengers wrapped in coats and cloaks of every form and shape, carrying plaids of every colour, extraordinary hats and caps on their heads, anxiously watching the safe stowage of their fishing tackle, or their precious gun-case ; sometimes a refractory dog is to be heard howling at its separation from its master, and being deposited in a dark hole.

Towards the end of a London season, you see whole nursery departments, children of all ages, gazing with wondering eyes upon the huge mass of carriages into which they are expecting to be lifted ; now and then the shrill cry of

an infant echoes through the roof of the lofty platform, and its nurse's pacifying soothings follow. Such a sound quickly disperses those gentlemen who may be lounging near; they rush into a carriage, fervently hoping that no evil chance may bring the luckless baby near them. Then fathers of families walk by with slow steps, thinking how confoundedly expensive it is to move a large party for their annual change of air. They step into the carriage at the last moment, just as the final bell is ringing, and are often in not the best of all possible humours.

Few things disturb a man's equanimity more than paying down his money; and few ways of spending it, are less satisfactory than travelling expenses: they are but a means for an end.

When the Harcourts found themselves in the carriage, although four horses were carrying them on at a very fair pace, the motion seemed so slow after the rush of railroad proceeding, that they all exclaimed about it.

However, nothing could be more enjoyable than driving through the lovely country they

were now traversing. The trees hung over the road, which often ran through the most rural lanes, where the fragrant woodbine trailed itself along the hedges which were filled with wild flowers. The pretty cottages with their porches overhung with clustering roses, and the well-cultivated gardens in which curly-headed children were playing, the straggling villages with their old church towers peering over the trees, afforded many delightful pictures of country life.

The Harcourts did not stop at any of the inns on the road longer than was necessary to change horses, for they were provided with a case of sandwiches and some wine and water ; and a very merry luncheon they had, inventing various little contrivances to supply the want of everyday necessities. How glad young people are to throw off, for a short time, the conveniences to which they have been accustomed. How joyfully they dispense with plates and forks, just for the pleasure of exercising their ingenuity to replace them. Old people cannot understand this ; they dislike to be put out of their way : things which are really trifles, appear of moment

to them ; they too often forget how delighted they were in their younger days to substitute the fresh leaves of the water-lily for plates in their rural picnics.

Mr. Harcourt entered into his daughters' amusement and little expedients, and joined in their merry laugh ; but his wife could not refrain from regrets that she had forgotten to bring such an article, or expression of complaint at some imaginary inconvenience.

Marion did all in her power to remedy these evils or to find some excuse for them, and her ready tact and active usefulness were of great avail in the attempt. The day passed on without any great interruption to its harmony and pleasure. As they advanced, they reached a more hilly tract of country, the scenery became grander, and they occasionally caught sight of the sea and the bold rocky outline of coast between the woods and hills in the distance. At one time the carriage road was on the edge of a deep ravine, at the foot of which was a lonely house ; the roaring waves dashed on the stones which seemed close beside it. It made Marion almost giddy to look down from this

tremendous height ; but the grandeur and imposing beauty of the scene quite rivetted her gaze.

After they had passed this glen, they crossed an open moor, where the sheep were grazing peacefully, the dews were just beginning to fall, a gentle mist hung over the valleys, the purple heather scented the air with its delicious fragrance and added to the loveliness of the summer evening.

Twilight was stealing on as they approached their journey's end ; they were descending the last hill, when they all exclaimed with delight at the beauty of the scene before them. The sea roared below them amid the red rocks which were mantled with foliage ; and in the fast fading light they could just distinguish the far stretching woods, and the rustic bridge which spanned the rapid foaming mountain torrent, which rushed onwards to the ocean. They could hear the murmuring dash of its waters as they fell over the rocks, which laying in its bed, impeded its course.

An old man soon directed them to the house they had engaged. They were not sorry to

leave the carriage, and to find themselves in a comfortable room where tea was prepared. The hissing urn soon appeared, and after due attention had been given to the bread and butter, they were very glad to retire and seek repose after the fatigues of their long day's travelling.

Marion and Adeline did not indulge in a late slumber the following morning, but sauntered out early to gain some little knowledge of their new situation. The dew still sparkled on the white roses which yet hung in rich clusters around the windows, and poured their odours on the gentle breeze. They strolled through some lanes near, where the large honeysuckle and bindweed bloomed in luxuriance. Marion attempted to reach one of the waxen blossoms of the latter, but it was beyond her reach ; Adeline then tried her skill and her superior height enabled her to gather it with ease. She gave it to her sister, who bent over the delicate flower with delight. An old woman had been watching their movements with surprise, for, in her estimation, the plant they so admired was but a straggling weed.

Marion saw her look, and kindly said :

“We are just come from London, and are quite pleased at finding ourselves in the country ; what a lovely place your village is.”

The old woman smiled at her delight, and said she had never seen any other place, but that she did not think much of it.

“Poor old dame,” said Adeline, “she would tell a different tale if she had been cooped up in the close alleys of London. How some of the poor creatures there would revel in this fresh breeze. Whatever privations the country poor suffer, they always have great advantage over the indigent in towns, for they need not be deprived of light and air.”

The girls wandered down the lanes, which were in perfect shade, so thick was the foliage of the overhanging trees, and were charmed with their walk. They returned laden with the wild flowers which sprung up in profusion every where. The vases in the rooms were soon filled with the tender blossoms, and the many coloured spiral grasses which are so graceful.

After breakfast a little unpacking was done,

and the drawing-room soon lost that look of chill desolation which mere tables and chairs, arranged with mathematical precision, convey. The sofa was wheeled round to the window, from which might be seen the village church overshadowed by a fine old yew-tree, the bold sweep of the coast, and the blue ocean. A few books, and one or two pretty work-baskets, lay on the table, and Marion's colour-box and sketch-books gave an air of habitable comfort.

The post time is always a matter of great interest and excitement in a country place: it is looked forward to with anxious expectations, the newspaper is hailed with the feeling of its being a gossiping friend come to beguile the time. At Fenton there was generally an impatient group gathered together in the small place, in which was the principal hotel, (for mere village as it was, it boasted of two hotels, as they were called there, but which in most places would have been considered quite secondary inns) the post-office, and *the* shop, in one window of which bonnets, ribbons of the gayest



hues, laces and gloves were displayed, and in the other, soap, candles, bacon, and other eatables.

This general receptacle was presided over by Mr. and Mrs. Brye; and you seldom passed it without seeing some one coming out or going in, for here all information of the lions of the neighbourhood might be obtained, and for those who liked a gossip, Mrs. Brye, with her good-natured face, and somewhat slovenly dress, was always ready to gratify their taste; she seemed to have some omniscient fairy who brought her tidings of every one's affairs; sometimes they happened to be true, but this was quite a chance, her narrations were amply embroidered; still she was an important person in Fenton—from cultivating the tastes of its female population in matters of finery, to interfering and advising upon the minutest arrangements of their household, her opinion reigned paramount.

Mr. Harcourt was always one of the loungers at the post-office about eleven o'clock, and he generally received a tolerable budget of letters.

With these, and his paper, he strolled down the lanes which led to the sea-shore, and seating himself on the rocks, amused himself with spelling over the closely printed paper, now and then levelling his telescope, which was his constant companion, or in watching the fishing-boats put off from the tiny harbour. Mrs. Harcourt, with a book, lounged near him, and the girls clambered about, and explored the little creeks and huge rocks on the shore, or rambled through the woods. Marion now and then attempting to sketch the panorama which surrounded her. Adeline seldom touched a pencil, she would recline under the trees, and while she idly twisted the graceful fern into a thousand forms, dreamily mused, or poured all her fancies and thoughts into Marion's ear; sometimes her wild spirits of mirth and glee would rise, and her merry laugh would echo through the solitude, and Marion would throw her drawing aside, after vainly endeavouring to continue it in spite of Adeline's nonsense.

Then there were rides and drives to be managed, and occasionally a luncheon *al fresco* was accomplished; although the pleasure of

these little plans was much diminished by Mrs. Harcourt's nervous fears and anxieties, which found vent in fretful speeches anticipating evil, and calculated to irritate the equanimity of most people, our party thought as little of it as they could. Mr. Harcourt's easy temper was seldom provoked, he had become too much accustomed to the nettles which grew round his domestic hearth, to heed their stings, or if they ever roused him, it was but a temporary ebullition which soon subsided.

Adeline drank in the beauties which surrounded her, and often forgot such matter-of-fact disagreeables in the indulgence of her own dreamy sensations; she was one who lived in the beauty and spirituality of nature, and shrunk from the shadows of life, as from some grim image; now and then she was wakened from this world of her own, by some rough storm, or irritating sirocco of temper, but her annoyance soon passed off, and left her as unoccupied as before.

Marion, though to a careless observer the most indifferent of the party, to these interruptions of harmony, was the one who felt them

most acutely, for she was vividly susceptible to all impressions; an unjust sarcasm, or sharp tone hurt her inexpressibly, yet she never replied to them, or allowed herself to appear ruffled; she increased daily in her stern self-control, until she almost acquired the power of sending back the tears which rushed to her eyes, and of steadying her voice, though every pulse was throbbing with excitement, and every fibre quivering in her frame, and to speak calmly on the most indifferent subjects.

I think she almost fancied this was her especial duty: fully aware of her quick feelings, she strove to hold them in complete subjection; but this apparent insensibility irritated Mrs. Harcourt more than anything else, and she always appeared to level her observations more pointedly at Marion than at any one. However, notwithstanding these little *contretemps*, the time passed on very rapidly. The few wet days were spent in finishing sketches which had been commenced in more propitious weather, in performing the long-neglected duties of correspondents, in reading or work, and sometimes in talking over the events of their gaiety in town;

how often their thoughts hovered over those past scenes, it would be difficult to say, or how much the society and conversation of some favourite friends was missed, and left a void for which no contemplation of loveliness could entirely compensate.

Perhaps it would have gratified Marion and Adeline had they known how much their absence was felt by some. Captain Vernon lounged at his club, and in the park much as he had done, but he felt no interest in the employment. Kensington Gardens looked dull, and the closed shutters of the Harcourts' house, which he passed occasionally, added to his melancholy feelings ; still he remained in town, and went to balls and dinners. At last invitations ceased, only a few equipages appeared in the park, blinds were drawn down over dirty windows, withered geraniums and mignonette unwatered and untended straggled over the balconies, dust and heat seem to hang over the deserted streets.

The shops were filled with sea-side costumes, with "wide-awakes," with extraordinary yacht-ing-coats, and most peculiar shooting-jackets,

with all the mysterious improvements of carpet-bags, of wonderful dressing-cases, and writing-desks amalgamated into one mishapen article, with all the useless luxuries in which so much money is annually squandered, with the excuse of convenience and portability. All seemed to announce the season being concluded, and to assert that London "was out of town."

Vernon called at his tailor's, and was informed that he had gone up the Rhine; muttering something complimentary about "the fellow's confounded impudence," he went to his boot-maker, who being a less fashionable character had only removed to Margate; Vernon could not help smiling at this general defection of his tradespeople, and thinking that as they had deserted town, it must be time for others to make arrangements for flitting also. The empty sofas and chairs at his club drove him to desperation; he wrote to his brother and told him he might expect him in a few days at Castle-ton.

Then he had the employment of looking after his guns, of lounging at the gunmaker's,

suggesting various alterations and improvements in the barrel, or in the lock of the case, then there were orders to be given for powder and caps, and all the paraphernalia of a sportsman's requisitions. He met Murray walking in a listless, aimless way, a day or two before he proposed leaving town, and found that he was still undetermined how to pass his long vacations, visions of a continental trip, of a tour to Norway, had attracted him ; but he told Vernon that he thought he should first make some visits nearer home, and then see what turned up, as at all events, he would have ample time for a visit to Paris before next term, even if he determined not to go any further a field.

Murray called at Stanley's chambers just before the commencement of the vacation, and found him immersed in business, with all his energies and thoughts bent upon his papers : for when the incitement for idleness had departed, Stanley returned to his old habits with increased devotion, and pursued his professional duties with redoubled vigour, as a kind of diversion from the disagreeable sense of loneliness which

crept over him. Unlike Vernon, who had sought for relief in gaiety, in the same scenes which he had enjoyed with Adeline, Stanley avoided the parks, declined all dances, and by hard reading endeavoured to dispel the entrancing spell which he felt was binding him.

His memory, however, would revert to the past; notwithstanding all his efforts to the contrary, Marion's bright truthful look, would rise before him, however the dull law might seek to dim its distinctness. Why did he resist the gentle influence? why did he shrink from the image of happiness which his fancy conjured up? Because he could not fling away his doubts, suspicious misgivings of her ingenuous simplicity would cross his mind, and with a sigh, he thought "she too may be false!"

Oh, grasping and exacting pride of man! must you have absolute perfection? Must an angel be granted to you before you will condescend to indulge your feelings and affections? True, they are precious, most precious to you, granted that a disappointment or a blight thrown



upon them is to extinguish the light of life, to obliterate the sun from nature, but if you are to persist for ever in misinterpretations, in vacillations, in suspicions, do you not lose opportunities of securing happiness of which you have dreamed for years?

Man cannot have occasions for procuring blessings always granted him; few such occur through life, wise are those who seize them, and catching the fortunate breeze, sail on, under its auspices "to the haven where they would be."

Stanley half determined to go into Italy during the long vacation, not because such a tour would give him pleasure, but to avoid the temptation of meeting Marion for two or three months, that he might return and see her again with less interested feelings, that he might judge whether she cared at all for him, by what he might hear of her during his absence, not recollecting how little he had said to her that he had not said to many others, forgetting how carefully he had avoided committing himself, and how unfairly he would act towards her by endeavouring to

penetrate her feelings before he had allowed her to know his own.

How often men act in this way ! They assure themselves of the state of a woman's heart before they compromise themselves. This line of conduct is one cause of the coquetry, by which so many women are spoiled. Matrimony becomes the great prize for which so many contend, feelings are the means by which it is to be gained, then arise all the manœuvres, all the arts which are played in this exciting game to entangle and interest them.

Who can wonder at the disappointment which arise when people awake from this trial of strength, or rather of expedients. If men would only be a little more sincere, a little less selfish, and a little more exalted, how different things would be. Stanley could not quite resolve upon rushing off to the continent ; he had hoped to have enlisted Murray as his companion ; but now that he had decided upon remaining in England for some time at least, his hesitation increased. At last he determined upon going

to his father's for a short time, where Murray promised to join him, and then Stanley hoped to prevail upon his friend to accompany him abroad.

Things being thus arranged, the young men parted. Murray was going to leave town immediately, but Stanley was detained for a few days by some heavy business, which he could not postpone, much as he regretted losing any of his legitimate holiday.

At last he found himself on the railroad, and was not long before he was traversing the lovely wood near Langston, now changed from the budding promise of spring into the rich luxuriance of summer. Some such change had passed over Arthur's feelings, since he had last wandered through them—then his musings were fanciful and somewhat variable and uncertain, now they had taken a form and substance, and had expanded and acquired strength and character.

This idea struck him, as he recollected the sweet dreams of happiness which had haunted him when he had last seen the sun sink beyond

the common he was now approaching. External nature has always her similitudes, and shadowy resemblances to the inner nature which reigns in man's heart.

## CHAPTER X.

Oh ! there is nothing holier in this life of ours, than the first consciousness of love : this first fluttering of its silken wings, the first rising sound and breath of that wind which is so soon to sweep through the soul to purify or to destroy.

LONGFELLOW

MARION wished to make a sketch in a wild valley which was not very far from their house. Adeline offered to accompany her, therefore one fine morning they started soon after breakfast, Marion carrying her sketch-book, and tin colour box, and Adeline a volume of Tasso. They had to cross one or two fields, before they reached the valley, the rough, stony path of which lay between high, rocky, acclivities, of

the most fantastic forms ; but little vegetation covered this barren soil, excepting the fern which waved its graceful stems among the rocks ; a few active sheep grazed on the sides of the hills, they might be seen on the loftiest peaks, and one paused to endeavour to discover by what means they had gained such a giddy position ; a few sea-gulls soared over head, and the harsh croak of the raven might be heard : these were the only living objects which seemed to exist in this wild gorge.

The view at the end of this valley was closed by a huge rock, which had a fanciful resemblance to a castle, the sea surged up at its base, and its murmurs might be heard at a long distance. A faint mist hung over the valley as Marion and Adeline entered it. The ocean lay like a pale blue mirror before them, with a tiny white sail shining in the distance : the deep shadows of the rocks, and the perfect solitude which pervaded the scene, increased the effect of its peculiar characteristics.

They at last found a good view of the picturesque rock, and of the distant coast beyond, and Marion sat down on a huge stone,

and commenced her labours ; soon the outline appeared, and then the debate arose of the merit of its being finished in pencil, or water-colours, or sepia ; however Indian-ink was at last decided upon, as affording the best medium for conveying the idea of cold, gloomy, desolation. While Marion was busily employed in tinting her drawing, Adeline read some of the stanzas of the “ Jerusalem Delivered ” to her ; they were deeply interested in the mysteries of the enchanted forest, when Marion all at once noticed how much the shadows had decreased, she looked at her watch, and found they must hasten home to be in time for lunch ; the pencils and brushes were soon consigned to their cases, and the girls began to descend from the hill where they had been sitting.

The ground was very rough, being covered with broken rocks, and loose stones, which were often concealed under the thick fern leaves, which caused them to make many stumbles, and false steps as they hurried on. All at once Adeline put her foot on a stone which slipped from under it, and she fell with an exclamation of pain. Marion hastened to assist her, but found

to her great vexation that the ancle was sprained.

Adeline attempted to rise, but the agony of her foot prevented her: all the surrounding objects seemed to swim before her, she sank back on the ground in a fainting fit. Poor Marion was dreadfully frightened, for there was no assistance to be procured without leaving Adeline, which was out of the question at present. All her hope was that some shepherd-boy might pass through the valley and see them; to attract any such chance passenger she attached her handkerchief to the end of her parasol, and rested it against a rock as a sort of signal; she then untied Adeline's bonnet, and taking off her gloves, rubbed her hands in the hope of restoring her consciousness.

For some time Adeline lay insensible, at last the colour returned faintly to her cheek, she opened her eyes; Marion sought to animate her, but there was no water near, nothing to give her. She stood up, and looked anxiously round, no one could be seen—what was to be done? Adeline could not possibly walk, and



they were at some distance from the village, at last Marion fancied she heard a dog bark, but it was very distant. How anxiously she listened for a repetition, then the report of a gun echoed along. She mounted a rock in the hope of distinguishing some one approaching—still no object appeared in the solitude. Adeline was looking deadly pale, and Marion feared that she would faint again.

She gave another anxious glance around; and on the distant hill she could just see a white spot which seemed moving restlessly, like a dog beating about, then another ran across, but still no human being—at last the figure of a man appeared. Marion waved her handkerchief, but it did not seem to have arrested his attention; she raised her voice, but it was as nothing in that wide space. Again and again she made the signal, and at last she saw the man stop; she waved it more rapidly than before—a hat was raised as an answering salute, and satisfied that she had been noticed, she descended from her point of observation to aid Adeline, begging her to keep up as assistance, was coming.

Adeline did try to throw off the creeping, sickly sensations which she felt: she strove to lie quietly and forget the accident, but her ankle was acutely painful, and throbbed with inflammation. Marion had removed her shoe, but she could do nothing more, she watched the progress which the sportsman was making towards them, he came forward, with rapid steps, his dogs bounding at his side; at last he was so near that Marion could distinguish his features: to her utter astonishment she recognized Captain Vernon, she sprang forward and told him in a few words how the case was.

They hurried back to Adeline to whom the surprise of this unexpected meeting acted like a restorative, but as she attempted to move her foot, she again seemed so faint, that Vernon was quite alarmed; he was so nervous himself, that he could do but little. Marion's exclamation, "Oh, if I had but a glass of wine to give her!" seemed to rouse him, he recollected his pocket-flask, and producing it said:

"What a fool I was not to think of that before: here, let me pour it out."

Marion supported Adeline, whose closing eyes and pale cheeks made her very apprehensive. While Vernon held the little silver cup to her lips, the sweet faint smile with which she took it, vibrated to his heart; he bent over her with the deepest devotion and most anxious care: the wine did her good, it restored the circulation and animation. She began to talk of how she was to get home; she asked no question to explain Vernon's sudden appearance, he was there, to assist her in her emergency—she wanted no more, and perhaps would have liked to have fancied he had been aided in his means of transport by some magician's power, like her heroes of the Italian poem.

“How shall I get back to Fenton? for I am afraid I cannot walk; my ankle is so painful.”

“It is utterly impossible for you to put your foot to the ground, you must not think of it; let me try to carry you, nay, I am strong enough for anything.”

Adeline did not like this proposal, but what was to be done?

Marion proposed walking back to seek a

donkey or some mode of conveyance, but she did not like to leave Adeline; yet as Vernon did not know the road, which would make him longer away, this seemed the only feasible plan. She therefore begged Adeline would keep perfectly quiet until she returned, and not talk or exhaust herself. She walked as fast as she could towards Fenton.

Vernon felt quite strange at being left in such a predicament; he anxiously watched Adeline's varying cheek, inwardly hoping she would not faint, for there are few things of which a man has a greater horror, than such an event. She leant against a rock, looking very lovely, although the animation which Vernon had so admired in her countenance, was gone. Yet he could not help thinking that she was more attractive to him as she reclined in that languid way in her simple morning dress, than she had been in the full blaze of her beauty in some gay ball-room. She tried to talk to him, but her voice failed, her lips grew white, and the dreaded fainting fit came on. He knelt beside her, and, in his anxiety to help her, put

his arm round her to support her ; her head fell helplessly on his shoulder, he chafed her cold hands, his heart beating wildly as he held her in his arms, she, his loved darling, resting there ; but the chill stillness of her brow checked these overwhelming feelings, and made him only anxious for her restoration.

When she felt the mysterious renewal of life which succeeds such an attack, a faint blush dyed her cheek, and raising herself from the support of his arm, looked earnestly along the road in search of Marion, who at last appeared with a donkey and a little urchin leading it.

“I fortunately met this boy long before I reached Fenton, and brought him back at once, or I should have been much longer. How pale, you look, Adeline. I hope you have not been ill again?”

“I am afraid I have for a minute. I am so sorry to have been so troublesome to Captain Vernon. How foolish you must think me, to make such a fuss about a sprain, when you must have seen such terrible accidents.”

“Now, Adeline, we must try to get home, I am afraid letting your foot hang down will make it ache, but it cannot be helped: let me tie your bonnet for you. Nonsense, you cannot get your shoe on. I will take care of it. Pray do not step on your foot. Do not be foolish, Adeline, you will faint again if you try.”

“Let me lift you up; I am sure that will be best,” said Vernon; and, without another word, he raised her in his arms, and placed her on the rude, droll saddle. He then contrived to make a resting place for her foot, by means of the strap of his powder flask and his handkerchief. When she was comfortably settled, the boy took the donkey’s head. Vernon picked up his gun, which he had thrown among the fern, and whistling to his dogs to follow him, he walked by Adeline’s side, watching most carefully every step the animal took. Marion, on the other side, was anxious to see how Adeline bore moving; but thanks to the Captain’s ingenious second stirrup, the pain did not seem increased by the exertion. If Vernon’s heart had not been irrecoverably lost

during the London season, his fate had been sealed by this morning's adventure. Every look he bent upon the pale face at his side, every tone that touched his ear, more irretrievably involved him in the sweet entanglements of a passionate love.

He knew that there could be no retreat now ; all he longed for was to be with her for ever, thus in the loneliness of the quiet country to be at her side, to feel she was smiling on him, and on him only, to indulge the delightful feelings which now swelled his breast, was all he asked—the wildest hopes flitted before him, and shone in his eyes, which dwelt on hers with ineffable tenderness. Happy, happy fellow ! dream on, this is the brightness of your life, the sunshine on its stream—let none of the evils of humanity cloud the purity and goodness of your love, keep it free from the stains of earth, guard it as its brightest treasure !

“How very fortunate it was for us, Captain Vernon, that you should happen to be here ; what should we have done?—I cannot think how poor Adeline would have managed.”

“I am very glad I have been able to render you any assistance, it has been very slight though. I must tell you how it is that I am in this part of the world. After I left town, I went to my brother’s for a week or two, and while I was there some old friends of my father, who had not seen me since my return to England, wrote and begged me to pay them a visit. I waited to have a little rabbit shooting at Castleton, and then arranged to fulfil my engagement to these people, Mr. and Mrs. Burton.”

“Oh! do they live at the Priory, a few miles from here?” asked Adeline.

“Yes, it is such a lovely place; they have no young people, so it is rather *triste*; but they are so unaffectedly kind and hospitable, that one gets on very well. I only arrived yesterday, and the old gentleman insisted upon my trying his dogs this morning, not that I expect there is much game to be found in this wild place; and then they promised to drive me into Fenton this afternoon; but they will not have that honour, for I shall be there without their assist-



ance. I am so glad you have not left this place, do you like it?"

"Extremely," answered Marion, "I could have scarcely imagined such beauty. I do not think we shall go just at present, we have not seen all the lions of the neighbourhood yet."

"Have you been to the Priory? strangers are admitted by writing their names in a book."

"No, we have only passed it, we had not time to go through, but the glimpses we caught were beautiful."

"I hope you will let me go with you then, for I assure you it is well worth a visit."

"I am afraid that this troublesome sprain will prevent my enjoying many expeditions, for the roads are so rough that at any time they are trying, but to a weak ankle they will be dreadful."

"We must doctor it carefully, Adeline, and it will soon be strong. I will shew you what an excellent nurse I am; I only hope this long ride will not hurt it. Has not the strap slipped a little, Captain Vernon?"

He came round and adjusted it again, and placed her foot in as easy a position as he could, being rewarded for his trouble by one of the beaming smiles he so loved. They were obliged to go a long distance round, for the donkey was not allowed to cross the fields through which the girls came in the morning, and which was a much shorter road.

“How surprised papa and mamma will be to see Captain Vernon,” said Marion. “I am afraid they will be anxious about us, for it is long after lunch time; however, the delay was unavoidable, and we may think ourselves very fortunate that it has been no worse.”

“I almost wonder they have not sent any one to look for us: they must have been frightened:—but look, is not that Thomas coming?”

“I declare it is, they have been hunting for us—we had better tell him our adventure, and let him go back as fast as he can, and have some hot vinegar ready to bathe your ankle.”

The servant came up, looking very much surprised at seeing Captain Vernon with his

young mistresses ; he soon received a message and directions, with which he hastened back. Mrs. Harcourt was dreadfully alarmed at the girls' non-appearance, and had been watching for them for some time, till at last she sent Thomas to search for them ; terrible forebodings of falls over precipices, loose horses, and even mad cattle had occupied her imagination, and it was certainly a great relief to her when she heard the real state of affairs.

She kept ringing the bells for vinegar, and sponges, and rags, and all kinds of things to be in readiness for their return ; the sofa was prepared for Adeline, and after worrying and nearly fretting herself into a nervous fever, she heard Adeline's laugh at the bottom of the lane, leading to the house. This rather re-assured her, she rushed down the garden to meet her, and forgetting Vernon's presence, began lamentations, animadversions, and lectures upon carelessness all in one breath, till Marion said :

“ I do not know what we should have done without Captain Vernon ; he has helped us out of all our difficulties.”

She then shook hands with him ; when they reached the door he lifted Adeline from the donkey, and carried her into the drawing-room and placed her on the sofa. The ankle was then examined and fomented until it became more easy ; then luncheon was thought of, and they all welcomed its announcement, for the excitement and exertion of the morning had given them an excellent appetite. Perfect rest was prescribed for Adeline, therefore she kept on the sofa, and Marion's morning walk having fatigued her, they remained at home in the afternoon.

Captain Vernon stayed with them for an hour or two, and then departed, for Mr. and Mrs. Burton dined early, and as it was the first day of his visit he did not like to neglect their hours. He took his leave, asking permission to call the next day to inquire after the ankle. He walked back to the Priory along the edge of the cliff which was many hundred feet above the sea, which dashed against its base ; the low murmur of its waves rising on the wind, and falling on Vernon's ear, soothed him into sweet reveries.

He found his friends in rather a wondering state about him, trying to account for his absence at lunch ; Mr. Burton vainly hoped that he had found so much sport that he had been tempted to remain on the hills ; but when he saw him return empty handed, this idea vanished.

Vernon soon explained the real cause of his delay, and related his morning's adventure. The kind old people were anxious he should bring his friends at any time to see the Priory, and proposed to call on them the next day, to offer any assistance to the invalid, knowing how often little comforts are not to be procured by strangers in a small village. Vernon was grateful for this ready thoughtfulness, and said when he called, he would say all they wished.

How slowly the evening passed away ! Vernon's thoughts were busy with recollections of the morning ; silently he paced the terrace near the Priory, gazing on the ocean which was heaving slowly and calmly in the distance, the moon's silvery radiance flooding its wide expanse. He had held her in his arms—her

hand had rested in his, true it had been in cold senselessness almost as unconscious as death—no warm life pulses had throbbed in unison with his own, no answering glance had met his impassioned gaze, yet still the thought of those few minutes haunted him, and made him dream fondly of the future he hoped for. Could she love him, she the lovely animated being he so madly worshipped, was it possible? A bright remembrance of the expression in her eyes when he left, whispered “do not despair.” Still the feeling that he was not worthy of her affection would remain.

For Vernon was anything but vain. With all the ardour of his imagination, he pictured Adeline in the glowing hues of almost angelic perfection, and he abandoned himself to all the bliss of loving her ; yet it was with a doubt, with a trembling fear of not winning her ; he did not know of all the endearing qualities he possessed, he only thought of his imperfections, but with the truth of an honest heart, he felt that he would guard her from every danger, and love her with an intenseness which should compensate for any other want ; with such entrancing

hopes, slumber came, and their visions pursued him through the night.

And Adeline—what did Adeline think of the day's occurrences? I am afraid she did not *think* at all—she mused and dreamed on indistinctly till she had called up pictures where the objects were veiled in such obscurity as those of a landscape, when a mist hangs over them and dims their outlines. She could not help feeling that she had guessed Vernon's secret; he was too frank, too impetuous to play the usual game of concealing it, until he could be sure of her partiality; she felt gratified, happy, for she could not but confess to herself that Frederic had certainly become an object of great interest to her.

But her feelings had not yet been graven in those ineffaceable, unextinguishable characters, which a love that has power to surmount all trials, to rise superior to all circumstances, stamps upon the heart, making that strong, which before was feeble; making life a reality, a responsibility, which before may have been but an aimless existence, like a stream in which no objects are reflected.

Perhaps this change might be wrought—and her dreams, lovely and pure as they were, be superseded by something higher and better. Yet Adeline's character was not formed to feel love in its most exalted form, for she was too impulsive, too much operated on by the external, too indifferent to the inner world of being; notwithstanding this, she was a very delightful, and a most fascinating creature, and just calculated to make poor Vernon as wildly in love as ever man was. The infatuating, absorbing passion now reigned in his heart—will it be for good or for evil. Momentous question—how much depends upon the result—for time, and for eternity!

And does Adeline think of the immense responsibility she will incur by this overwhelming influence she is acquiring? will she pause and inquire if she can use it for good? will she resolve that it *shall* be for his benefit? Alas! no—she will not think of her position in this serious way; she will float amid its sunny light, breathe amid the balmy odours, the magic atmosphere which a happy love creates—thus like too many of the sons and daughters of



mortality life loses its influence, events their importance until some storm wind arises, and then the unprepared vessel is stranded on the hidden rocks. Duty, stern, unconquerable duty will avenge itself if neglected, and bitter are the lessons it teaches when the brightness of early days is gone, when the sweetness and ardour of affection are collapsing beneath the breath of disappointment, when the flowers of life are fading, and there is no strength, no firmness left in its main stem. Oh ! then may a merciful God help those beings, who thus anchorless, thus rudderless are floating out upon the trackless ocean of an unknown eternity.

## CHAPTER XI.

Great ocean! strongest of creation's sons,  
Unconquerable, unreposed, untired,  
That rolled the wild, profound eternal bass  
In Nature's anthem, and made music such  
As pleased the ear of God! Original,  
Unmarred, unfading work of deity,  
From age to age enduring and unchanged,  
Majestic, illimitable, vast.

POLLOK.

"MARION, do give me my work-basket before you begin your drawing; I shall try and finish my purse now that I cannot go out, for I am quite ashamed of having been so long about it."

"Where is it? I remember now; it was taken into your room last night. I will go

and fetch it; but will you not arrange the flowers first; I will gather them."

"Yes, I shall like that; bring me the vases, and let me have plenty of roses, dearest; they blow in such clusters here that we never seem to miss those we pluck."

Marion left the room, and soon returned with a basket full of pink and white roses, of the elegant drooping fuschia, the fragrant sweet-briar, and many other flowers. Adeline shook them out upon the table, and was soon busily engaged in grouping them.

In the midst of this employment, Captain Vernon entered; the flowers were strewn over the sofa as well as the table, and some had fallen on the floor. Adeline looked to him like the presiding spirit of their loveliness. How tender were his inquiries about her ankle! how anxious his solicitude for her comfort! his countenance beamed with expression as he sat beside her and watched her fingers among the flowers, which he held for her.

At last they were finished, and were pronounced to be perfect. No improvement could be suggested, and Marion replaced them on

their accustomed places. Adeline began to work, and Vernon read to her ; he read a few pages of Tennyson. When he paused, Adeline exclaimed :

“What a pity it is to be obliged to stay in such a lovely day ! I am so sorry ! I wish I could go even in the garden. I wonder how long this tiresome ankle will keep me a prisoner ?”

“Why should not your sofa be carried into the garden while it is so warm ? I am sure it could not hurt you. Do you think there would be any imprudence in it, Miss Harcourt ?” said the Captain, appealing to Marion, who answered :

“Indeed I do not. Should you like it, Adeline ?”

“Very much. I should enjoy it of all things. Do ring and ask Thomas to come and wheel the sofa out.”

“I will help him to carry you upon it, and then there will be no occasion for you to move your foot, which is really a great point towards its rapid restoration.”

“Indeed, I cannot think of troubling you in such a manner.”

“You would not talk of trouble if you knew what pleasure it gave me to be able to do the slightest thing for you; you must indulge me,” he whispered, as he bent over her.

Thomas soon appeared, and he and the Captain carried the sofa into the garden, and placed it under the shade of an ash tree which grew there. Adeline was rejoiced at the change in her position, and smiled brightly on Vernon, as she thanked him for the suggestion. How carefully he laid her shawl over her, and then fetched a tiny table on which to place her basket. After he had completed these arrangements for her convenience, he threw himself on the grass at her feet, and talked in his own peculiarly agreeable manner.

How quickly the morning passed away. Marion sat drawing in the breakfast-room, and could hear the laugh and mingling voices as they were poured forth; she was so happy to see Adeline interested and amused—she was

gratified that she should be appreciated by a noble-hearted fellow like Vernon, for Marion did him justice, valued him for his many estimable qualities. She did not go near them, that long bright morning, she left Vernon to make his own impressions uninterruptedly, till at last when luncheon was announced, she called to him to come in.

He started with surprise at the lateness of the hour, and hastened into the house. Marion and he were alone, for Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt had gone to spend the day with an old infirm friend, a few miles away; the invalid was not left long alone. Vernon and Marion soon returned to her, and read and worked together in the garden through the afternoon.

It had been a happy day to them all, so calm, so peaceful; there had been no disturbing influences, no annoying trifles to ruffle them. To Marion this calm was in itself a pleasure, though she thought much of the realities of life, of its trials and sorrows, and did not shrink from them, it was delightful not to have them forced upon her, to return as it were to the unthinking

days of childhood, before she had become aware of the importance of events, and saw those consequences attend everything.

And Adeline had been happy, she had been the sole object of Vernon's attention ; he had given her every thought, and his conversation had amused and excited her. What girl would not have looked back with pleasure to a day spent in such circumstances ?

I cannot describe the sweet, tender feelings Vernon had experienced, he had been as it were, in some dream ; sitting near her, reading to her, getting anything she required, hearing her voice, sunning himself in her smiles, to have the power of doing all this, was everything to him—he went away that night more completely, more entirely her slave than ever, only anxious for the morrow ;—could he always enjoy such days, he would not have been sorry for Adeline's ankle to have been rather tardy in recovery. He liked so to know that he was of some use to her, that he prevented her feeling her confinement to the sofa so irksome.

Several days elapsed before Adeline could walk at all, she was carried into the garden for several hours, there she lay enveloped in a shawl, looking far too bright and merry for an invalid. By her side, either Marion or Vernon were generally to be found, for notwithstanding the walks in which they accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt, Adeline was seldom left alone.

One morning, Mr. and Mrs. Burton came into Fenton to call upon the Harcourts, and offered their pony carriage for Adeline's use, until her ankle was sufficiently strong for walking. They were so kind and cordial in their proposal, that she was charmed with them, and as her foot was rapidly improving, an early day was talked of, for all the party going to the Priory, to explore its beauties. The old people were quite pleased with Vernon's friends.

"That youngest girl is one of the prettiest creatures I ever saw in my life," said Mr. Burton, as he drove his wife back, "I think Mr. Frederick is a clever fellow to look after her."



“She is very lovely, her eyes remind me of some picture of Sappho abroad ; do you not remember it ? But I like the eldest, she is so gentle and so kind, and she spoke so distinctly that I heard every word, and yet her voice is very low. I am sure she would be a treasure to me, now I am getting so deaf.”

“What an idea to suppose a young girl like her would sit reading all those dull books which suit you and me, what can you be thinking of, my dear ?”

“I am sure she would do that, or anything else to make one comfortable, did you see how kindly she gave me her arm, and how carefully she helped me into the carriage ; that showed real thoughtfulness to see after an ugly old woman as I am now.”

“Well, I hope it will be fine when they come to the Priory, for I think they will be pleased with it—the terrace will suit Frederick and his lady. I see now why he is so fond of wandering about there by himself ; he is a fine fellow, and I shall be very glad to see him well married, he is so like his poor father.”

“How rapid your imagination is, Walter, you see him with a pretty girl, and immediately fancy he is to marry her.”

“And pray what on earth is to prevent them? I hate to see young people philandering on without meaning anything; however, trust me, Fred means matrimony: he won’t leave us without determining his fate, and as for Miss Adeline, if that’s her name, she won’t have the folly to say ‘no,’ to such a fine fellow as the Captain; unless indeed, some one else has made an impression, and then—why she ought to be ashamed of herself for giving him such speaking looks as I saw just now, no, take my word for it, Kate, they will settle matters before very long.”

Quite satisfied with this conclusion, the old gentleman drew up at the Priory, and handed his wife from the tiny equipage. Two or three days after this, Vernon drove to Fenton in this carriage, for the purpose of Adeline’s going to the Priory in it, for although she was sufficiently recovered to walk over the grounds, she could not reach them without some vehicle.

As they proposed spending the whole day

from home, a basket of provisions, and sundry shawls were packed in the carriage. Vernon handed Adeline in it, and carefully gave her a stool for her feet, and then jumped in himself, for he was to drive the ponies, which were too spirited to be given up to a stranger's hand, the rest of the party were going to ride, so they made quite a cavalcade at starting, but Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt were by no means inclined to urge their shaggy little steeds out of a slow pace, and Marion remained with them so that Vernon soon passed them, for the ponies trotted quickly over the rough roads, sometimes rather to the risk of the springs of the carriage.

Adeline enjoyed her drive most thoroughly ; Vernon was a capital whip, and she was not at all timid, so that none of her pleasure was diminished by fear, although the road did run along the edge of a very steep precipice. She looked fresh and joyous as she leant back beside Vernon, who I am afraid, looked much too often at her, instead of between his ponies' ears, therefore forfeiting much of his character for skill in holding the ribbons. Adeline gave

such a start of pleasure as they entered the Priory gates, that she nearly overbalanced the fairy carriage, however all was safe, and Vernon pulled up, to let her gaze on the lovely scene which lay before them.

The sea ran into a little bay just in front of the house, and the coast as far as they could see stretched itself into bold points and headlands. The sun gleamed on the waves as they dashed against the rocks, and glinted on the rich woods which on one side clothed the cliffs; it was a most exquisite vista. Vernon then drove round to the entrance, and throwing the reins to a servant, sprung out and assisted Adeline to descend; he insisted upon her taking his arm to cross the hall into the breakfast-room, where Mr. and Mrs. Burton were sitting, for fear of her slipping on the marble floor.

She was most kindly received by the old people, who installed her on a sofa, until the rest of the party arrived. They soon made their appearance, having dismissed their ponies at the gates. After a short rest, they all sallied forth to see the grounds; beautiful

winding paths had been cut through the woods which led to the summit of the highest cliff, from which a most expansive view could be seen ; on one side lay the dreary valley, wild and bleak, and on the other, the most cultivated luxuriance, and below, the tossing waves, on which the sea birds were sporting, their shrill cries sounding above the murmur of the surges.

When they descended on to the terrace, they found other walks leading from it, still through woods, on to the shore. Adeline was tired with her excursion, much as she had enjoyed it, and was not sorry when she found herself on the beach, where they had arranged to lunch. Vernon spread a shawl on a rock for her, and entreated her to rest. He sat beside her, and for almost the first time in their acquaintance, Vernon and Adeline were silent.

The sea was rolling up among the shelving rocks, which formed a species of cove ; there was nothing to interrupt the vision, until the boundary of the horizon—vast space was before them. There are mysterious voices in the

sounds of the ocean, which speak to the heart of man as no other sounds in nature speak. The never-ceasing movement of its waters, ever murmuring to the winds, seem to tell him of his everlasting duration ; its depths, which none can fathom, where lay buried such treasures unknown and unimaginable, remind him of the engulfing nature of Time, which swallows up all earthly things ; its changing hues, reflecting back the fleeting clouds above it, whisper of man's soul, on which are but too rapidly mirrored, the influences which surround him.

There is an awe, a pensiveness engendered by gazing on the ocean, which is felt by almost everyone. Vernon was not insensible to it, as he sat beside Adeline ; his heart filled with love, which seemed to him vast as the waste of waters before him, as profound as their depths. Adeline gazed on the foaming waves, till she grew quite sad, and at last turned away from them, for the scene was not one she loved. It spoke too plainly of endurance, of sublime thought for her volatile nature. Her restless movement aroused Vernon from his reverie.

“Is your foot painful? I am so afraid you have exerted it too much this morning, you have been up and down such steep places.”

“No, thank you, it is tolerably easy. I only moved for a little variety, for there is nothing very amusing here. Have you been counting the waves, Captain Vernon, or solving some intricate problem, that you have looked so grave the last ten minutes?”

“Have I? I was thinking of the future, which sometimes seems bright as the sunbeams, and sometimes dark as that deep shadow.” He fixed his eyes on her with a searching expression as he added earnestly, “Can you not guess the cause of such changeful prospects as mine? Have you no idea of my feelings, Adeline?”

It was the first time he had ever called her so, and the unusual tone of his voice called the colour to her cheeks. He ventured to take her hand, but just as he touched it the voice of Mr. Burton was heard near. Adeline hastily withdrew it, and began to fling pebbles into the waves. Vernon started up to meet the

rest of the party, who came down the slope on to the beach.

"Hollo, Fred!" called out Mr. Burton, "how came you here? We have been looking for you. I thought you had been resting in some of the shady caverns above."

"Miss Adeline was tired, therefore I showed her the short cut here, and we have been expecting you for some time; very impatiently, I assure you, for I concluded luncheon would appear in your train."

"What a pretty fellow you are, to talk about luncheon when you had a *tête-à-tête* with a young lady. Miss Adeline, you should take him to task for such ungallantry—he is a disgrace to his profession. In my younger days, young men were in much better training."

Marion proposed that they should find some sheltered nook, where they might sit down comfortably and discuss their sandwiches. She and the Captain went to reconnoitre, and soon returned to announce they had selected a dining-room. Shawls and wrappers were soon



laid down, and they seated themselves as they liked.

“Come, Miss Harcourt, you must taste this pigeon pie. I had it brought expressly for you young ladies. You are laughing at my proposal, I see, because you think we have no plates. Look at the bottom of my especial basket you will find some. I do not like dining, as people try to persuade me our first parents did in Paradise, with leaves as substitutes for china, therefore when I come pic-nicing I take care to secure a few of the necessaries of life.”

“What are those huge iron rings for, which are fixed in this rock? Are they the remains of the smuggler’s contrivances, for I should think this had been one of their haunts?” asked Mr. Harcourt.

“I fancy not. I believe they are connected with my fishing scheme, which I tried in vain to carry out. These rings alone remain, and I dare say have given rise to plenty of extraordinary stories of smugglers, for the people about here are wonderfully superstitious, and

are credulous enough to believe the most wild and impossible things. You know we have a ghost on these hills, which still wanders about, according to popular belief. I understand some of my labourers assert they have seen it in the copse yonder."

"But, I dare say there were smugglers here, Mrs. Burton;" said Marion.

"Ah, yes, my dear! there are several of their caves in this neighbourhood, but I think very little of that trade is carried on now, for the risks are greater than the profits would compensate."

"I wonder you are not afraid of burglars in this quiet place," remarked Mrs. Harcourt. "What should you do? you are so far away from assistance—I should be terrified beyond everything—I would not live here on any account."

"We never hear of such things in this quiet part of the country, the people are all my tenants, and far too quietly disposed for such attempts; I have always loaded fire-arms in the house in case of emergencies, so that I feel tolerably secure. Fred, I hope if any

attack is meditated, they will come while you are with me, for you would be of some assistance."

"I should fire at the first man I met, I can tell you ; there was such a joke against me the other day at Castleton. About two o'clock one morning, I heard a noise down stairs, as if some one was trying to break in ; I listened, still it continued ; I opened my door, and fancied I heard some one whispering outside the house—my pistols being unloaded, I thought I would go and wake one of the servants before I waited to load them ; I called up the butler, he listened for a moment, and then said :

"'It's nothing but the chimney-sweeps, Sir ; they always come in the night, so as not to interfere with the cooking in the day-time.'"

"So I turned in again, not in the best of humours at having been roused at such ungodly hours, by such a remarkably uninteresting circumstance. I was very glad my pistols happened to be unloaded, otherwise, as sure as fate, I should have gone directly where I heard the sound, and if I had seen a man with a blackened

face in the house, I most certainly should have fired at him, which might have caused an unpleasant business. I assure you I was famously laughed at for my midnight alarm."

"Well, if all alarms terminated as quietly, it would be very satisfactory?" said Mrs. Burton.

They had sat laughing and talking till the afternoon had nearly passed; the tide was ebbing fast, leaving the sand firm and shining between the rocks; a heavy bank of clouds was rising to the westward, and the wind began to blow freshly. Mr. Burton who was experienced in the signs of the weather, urged their moving nearer shelter, as he prophesied a storm would come on, before two hours had elapsed.

This made them all on the move, shawls were gathered hastily together, the baskets rapidly stowed into the carriage, and after a parting look at the picturesque cove, they turned towards home. They were not far from the Priory, but the Harcourts thought it would be better to go back to Fenton instead of waiting there as Mr. and Mrs. Burton proposed; they therefore had a carriage prepared which would

contain them all, instead of the pony chaise which had been used in the morning, and parting from the old people and Vernon at the entrance of the valley, the Harcourts returned to Fenton.

The sky grew rapidly darker, a lurid red light tinged the mass of clouds near the sun, but all besides was murky and black. The valley, wild at all times, looked most desolate under such an atmosphere, and the distant thunder rolled over the hills. Mrs. Harcourt was most anxious to reach home, she was always nervous in a carriage, and the prospect of a heavy thunder storm was certainly not inviting to the bravest, when the chances were, that if the horses became frightened and restive at the lightening, they might all be dashed to pieces.

However they reached the village before the severity of the storm began ; soon after they were safely housed, it raged with great fury, the lightening flashed vividly across the sea, the thunder growled above them, and the rain drifted in torrents from the hills ; it was a wild night, but Adeline seemed heedless of it, and unconscious of the gusts of wind which shook

the windows. She was thinking of Vernon, of his looks and voice all through the past day, and above all of the few words he had said on the beach. She felt he loved her, she asked no more, but thought of the future, and yielded to the pleasant sensations which attend the knowledge of loving and being loved again.

Marion guessed something of Adeline's feelings, but she made no remark ; she knew than an indiscreet question, or an injudicious remark on such delicate matters, will sometimes call up disagreeable sensations, and destroy in one moment, dreams of happiness, which might perhaps have lasted for ever.

## CHAPTER XII.

And there when evening in the sky  
Hath her cloud-altars tipped with fire,  
The lone bird slowly wandering by,  
Shall sadly wake its woodland lyre ;  
And there the spirit stars shall beam  
With softer light and gentler grace  
Than ere they yet were known to gleam  
On earth's most royal burial place,  
And not a foot shall dare intrude,  
Save angels in the solitude.

w. w.

ONE evening, as the Harcourts were passing the hotel at Fenton, the coach drew up, and, to their surprise, they saw Stanley upon the box. He was soon shaking hands with them, and, if a blush may be interpreted into pleasure, Stanley

had no reason to be dissatisfied with the reception he met with from Marion.

"We shall have quite a gathering of the dons here soon," said Mr. Harcourt, "do you know Captain Vernon is staying in the neighbourhood?"

"No, indeed, I did not; I fancied he was still at Castleton. Has he been here long?"

"About three weeks, I think," answered Mrs. Harcourt, "he has joined several of our pic-nics and expeditions; he is so merry and good-natured, that we have found him a great acquisition. He is visiting the Burtons who live at the Priory, one of the prettiest places about here. We have formed their acquaintance, and find them very pleasant people."

"I think you will like them, Mr. Stanley," said Marion, "they are so genuine."

Stanley smiled. This remark pleased him: it showed him that Marion recognized one of his strongest predilections; and it is always agreeable to feel one's traits and peculiarities are understood and remembered. They all walked towards the Harcourts' house, chatting and laughing. Mrs. Harcourt asked:



“Have you seen anything of Mr. Murray lately?”

“Yes, he has been staying with me at Langley; indeed, he is still there with my father, with whom he is a great favourite. The fact is, my father is not very well, and he fancies a little change will do him good. He has heard so much of Fenton, that he decided upon coming here. Therefore, I am arrived first to look for rooms for him, and when he hears from me, he will start.”

“You were at school with Murray, I think?”  
Mr. Harcourt enquired.

“Yes; and we have been friends ever since. He is very peculiar in some things, but an excellent fellow. He is rather too theoretical in his ideas:—to hear him talk of matrimony, you would fancy he could live upon next to nothing for the sake of having a home and domestic happiness. He will tell you that he could settle down quietly upon an income which I know he nearly spends now in cigars; that is nonsense, and Murray is the last man in England, who should think of trying such a hazardous experiment.”

“Then you think that a large income is necessary to insure happiness, Mr. Stanley? In that case, how few young men can marry, they must wait until they are getting middle-aged, and lose the best part of life because they require so many luxuries.”

“Excuse me, Mr. Harcourt, that is far from my meaning, no one is more averse than I am to the absurdity of men requiring large establishments, a carriage, and expensive society, before they can marry ; but I do say that it is very dangerous for most men (of course there are exceptions) to marry, without being able to live comfortably ; how very few would care for a home devoid of all the conveniences to which they have been accustomed, the daily annoyance of ill-dressed dinners, the scanty attendance of one or two servants ; minor deficiencies and privations are certain to be experienced, and perhaps, as years roll on, an increasing family springs up, and then the miseries of an inadequate income are felt—when boys ought to be sent to school, when education is a necessity, and no means are at hand to meet the expense. When all these

accumulated annoyances press upon them, most men awake from their dreams of romance, to blame themselves bitterly for their folly ; and perhaps become indifferent to home, and go, if possible, to clubs—then the poor wife suffers in health, in spirits, and too often in temper.”

“What a picture you have drawn, Mr. Stanley,” said Adeline, “with such weapons against imprudent marriages, I should think few of your friends would venture upon them, you would effectually frighten them ; but I dare say you are right, few men would like *their wife* to become a household drudge, it is hurting their own selfishness to see one so nearly connected with themselves so debased.”

“That is a very harsh way of reasoning. I think men are often annoyed with themselves for having taken a woman from a happy home, when they see care and anxiety upon her brow, and miss the pretty toilettes and those nameless little elegancies that used to please them in days gone by, and which they cannot afford to present them ; depend upon it, little things like these constantly recurring, are what make a man reflect.”

“But after all, these things should not interfere with the affections, Mr. Stanley,” pleaded Marion, “trifles like these would be disregarded, if people really loved each other.”

“In some few instances perhaps, but not as a rule, for affection, instead of softening such trials, is often weakened by them. I do not say that no one could rise above such trials, but I do say that after all it is a dangerous experiment; if it succeed, all honour to the bold ones who risked opposing the world’s advice, who chanced everything upon the hope of happiness. But believe me, our friend Murray is by no means the fellow for such a trial — his fastidiousness and refinement would be shocked every hour in a home of poverty; no, consistency is the great object to bear in mind. Love in a cottage is a pretty idea when one is lolling on a comfortable sofa, tells well in poetry, and may be tolerated in a novel, but for real life—excuse my matter-of-fact opinions—something rather more material is desirable; you know what the old song says :

“When poverty comes in at the door,  
Love flies out at the window.”

“Here is our abode; it is rather a pretty cottage for such a poor little village as Fenton, you will come in to tea Mr. Stanley, I hope,” said Mr. Harcourt.

“With great pleasure, tea in the country resumes its proper place in the scale of our arrangements, it is terribly neglected in town. What a profusion of roses you have here; really, this is very pretty.”

The drawing-room window was open, for it was a lovely, warm evening, the perfume of the roses floated languidly in, the small table was near it, and the tea equipage ready prepared, all looked comfortable and domestic. Marion soon appeared, and began the mysteries of the tea table.

Stanley sat near her, and enjoyed this quiet party. It was something new to him, for much as he had mixed in society, he had never been intimate in families, had never spent his evenings quietly with them; and his own home, elegant and refined as it was, had no female influences, for Mrs. Stanley had been dead some years, and had left no daughters.

The hissing urn, the delicate china, all the

appendages of the tea-table were always part of the future, of the peaceful, blissful images of home, of which Stanley thought; and now when he saw Marion looking so gentle, yet so bright and happy, as she busied herself at the table, he fancied his dream was realized. Adeline chatted cheerfully and pleasantly, and after tea she opened the piano, and played for some time; she had great feeling as well as execution in her musical powers, and some of the movements from Mozart's masses she rendered most expressively.

Mr. Harcourt took up the paper, as he always did when Adeline was at the piano. Mrs. Harcourt had a letter to write, therefore Stanley was not obliged to talk, so he leant back in his chair, and gave himself up to all the delightful impressions, which really good music produces upon an imaginative and educated man. His eye rested on Marion, as she bent over her work, the light fell from the lamp, falling upon her beautifully formed head, and shining on her drooping curls; he thought of what Murray had often said to him, that he

did not know women, because he had never seen them in private life, in their real characters, and Stanley half sighed that he had never enjoyed such a home scene before.

At last Adeline turned and asked Marion to sing with her.

“Do, dearest, you have quite lost your cold, besides I have been pouring my music upon you all so long, that I want some companion to bear part of the blame, if you have been bored.”

Marion turned over the leaves of the book on the piano, and then began the rich, sweet chords of the Sicilian Mariner’s Hymn. When the two voices rose, and breathed the touching notes of that exquisite chant, Marion’s low, mellow voice harmonised perfectly with Adeline’s clear silvery tones, and as the last words “ora pro nobis,” died away, Stanley thought he had never known what music was before. The old clock of the church rang out the hour soon after, and Stanley rose to depart.

As he walked back to his hotel, those lovely sounds still haunted him; he dwelt upon every look, every word which had fallen from Marion that evening; he thought of the sudden flush which had mantled her cheek when she had first seen him on the coach; he could not misinterpret her look of pleasure, notwithstanding the extreme quiet of her manners, and, wonderful to say, he did not feel inclined to suspect and to be dissatisfied with the words and feelings he had heard expressed.

The next day was Sunday, a warm, pleasant day; the extreme heat of the summer was past, and the calm quiet of the early autumn had succeeded it, a warmer tint rested upon the woods, and in their depths might be discerned that peculiar smell of balmy damp which tells of the decay of the beautiful flowers; the village chimes pealed through the fresh morning air, and numerous groups of the peasants, in their neat holiday attire, came from the neighbouring farms and loitered about the churchyard; the curly-headed children stood talking together



instead of indulging in their usual noisy gambols, till the last chime was rung, and they all entered the sacred edifice.

Stanley sat near the altar, and a feeling of awe and devotion crept over him as he watched the small congregation take their seats, and heard the somewhat trembling tones of the old vicar in the words of the solemn Liturgy. After the service he met the Harcourts, and Vernon soon joined them; they lunched together, and had a stroll on the cliffs; the young men then returned to the hotel and had an hour's chat.

"What shall you do this evening, Arthur? Let us go and have a walk with the Harcourts; I dare say they will come; they are capital walkers."

"I think I shall go to church first; I like the evening-service in the country, and then I will join you at tea, after your walk."

This being arranged, they parted. Stanley went into the church to see the monuments; their quaintness and antiquated phraseology touched him, recording the rude forefathers of

the hamlet. The extreme beauty of the building struck him ; it was in the old Gothic style, with stained-glass windows, the small chancel divided from the body of the church by a beautifully-carved screen of oak, the old wooden pews and worn pavement speaking of days gone by.

While he was musing, Marion entered, and went into a pew near him. She was alone, therefore he ventured to ask her if she could give him a seat. She willingly assented, and then the organ sounded the familiar notes of the Evening Hymn, the high, shrill voices of the village children mingling with its deeper chords. Then the beautiful, touching prayers, which have been breathed by so many good and holy ones during so many years, succeeded ; and Stanley could hear Marion's low voice join in the responses. He felt as if he would have given worlds to have had a legitimate right to the prayers of one so pure and gentle. The bright beams of the evening-sun fell upon the windows, and threw a tinted light upon some of the tablets of the dead, like the halo of many

memories which affection casts over their names.

When the simple sermon was concluded, and the blessing given, Marion and Stanley left the church and found themselves in the churchyard ; the sun had sunk below the horizon, the ocean slept in calmness, a faint breeze murmured in the branches of the old yew-tree ; there was scarcely a twitter to be heard, for the birds were roosting. The tombstones around them spoke of rest and peace. There is a feeling of awe and thoughtfulness which arises as one passes through a churchyard ; there they all lie together ; the old, wearied with their lengthened pilgrimage are there ; the young, who had scarcely lost their first flush of ardour and eagerness are there ; those who had gone to the grave in tears and amid sorrows, those who were cut off in all their enjoyments and expectations are there.

Death has claimed them all, and they are waiting for their resurrection. Why should death be so terrible ? why should we picture it as a grim spectacle at the end of the avenue of

life? Fear and dread are not the sentiments inspired by a cemetery; rather hope and faith are engendered by it. There is a secret feeling in most of our hearts of longing for rest and quiet; and is not the grave the passage to this cessation from troubles and trials, to those who have made the right use of the discipline of life? These thoughts were influencing Stanley's heart as he walked beside Marion.

“How beautiful that last hymn was this evening!” she said; “the words never struck me so forcibly before.”

“It was; but the whole service was very impressive: some of the evening-prayers are peculiarly expressive. I understood you were all going for a walk; Vernon talked of joining you.”

“I believe the rest are gone; but I preferred going to church; but, I confess, I had no idea that you would have been there; I thought you had gone for a solitary ramble, that you might indulge in your cigar.”

“No, I am not such a bear as that. I

should certainly have accompanied Vernon, had I not intended to go to church."

"I think they are at home ; I hear Adeline's voice, and there is papa's laugh. Will you not come in ? I must go up and take off my bonnet."

Stanley passed another evening of quiet, pure happiness. Life began to wear a different hue to him ; his suspicious misgivings were lulled by Marion's ingenuous truth ; the cold, sneering tone was seldom heard in his voice, and a warmer, happier smile was seen on his lips.

A few days passed on, spent in wandering about, exploring the beauties of the neighbourhood ; visiting the river, and watching its rapid falls over the huge rocks ; climbing the highest hills, sketching, and talking. Captain Vernon was more in love than ever. He soon confessed to Stanley the state of his feelings.

"Is it to be one of your numerous flirtations, Fred ? You have had so many, that I should think you understood the whole art and mystery of love-making better than most people."

“You may well call them flirtations, Arthur, for I never felt for any one as I do for Adeline Harcourt; it is as different as possible. In London, perhaps, I talked and laughed with her as I have done before, but now I cannot; sometimes I feel quite silent-bound. She must find it very dull.”

“Nonsense, if she feels anything about it she understands it, and must be very well satisfied; but if she does not, why then the sooner you find it out and are off the better, old fellow. But, seriously, I do not think you need be very unhappy; for if I am not very much mistaken, you have found some means of making an impression upon the fair Adeline. She certainly is very beautiful, and I think you may do anything with her, she is not yet spoiled; but marry her, Vernon, before she undergoes the ordeal of another London season. As your wife, it will be quite another matter.”

Stanley was not quite the man Vernon would have chosen to confide the progress of his wooing to, highly as he esteemed him; there

was something almost of harshness in his counsel and remarks at times, which made the Captain wish for Edward Murray, that he might give him some of his kind, friendly, yet somewhat fanciful advice, and sympathize with him in his happiness. He would have written to him, if it had not been for a few words which fell from Stanley on the subject.

“So Murray has been staying with you at Langley ; what did he do to amuse himself ? Moralise, moon about, or was there any one with whom he could get up an interesting friendship ?”

“He used to lounge about, and gossip with my father, and talk to me of his past experiences, most of which I knew before. Do you know, Fred, I think poor Edward was decidedly touched by your ladye-love ; he was always talking to me about her before she came out, and he certainly was very devoted in his attentions until you so regularly cut him out. He does not know you are here, or he would give it up as a lost case ; but I think he has some floating hopes of what

next season may bring. Now, if you are wise, you will not leave this without understanding what Adeline's feelings are. Never trust a woman with two lovers ; never give her such an opportunity for coquetry."

"But do you think she would prefer Murray? She has known him much longer than she has me, and he is really a good fellow. I would not take advantage of the circumstance of my being here, and bind her to me, if I thought she would regret it afterwards."

"Now, Vernon, do not be so over-refined in your ideas. Surely you must know whether Adeline has any feeling for you ; for although I believe a woman is more difficult to comprehend than any other part of creation, yet you have had so many opportunities of seeing her, you must have some idea of her sentiments."

"Sometimes I flatter myself that she is not perfectly indifferent, then I feel doubtful ; but the chance of Murray having made any impression never occurred to me."

"If my opinion be of any consequence to



you, I do not believe she cares one straw for Edward, and I am tolerably certain that you would not have any insurmountable obstacle to combat ; but if you do not speak, and Murray is thrown much with her, with his winning manners and fascinating conversation, I would not like to have a large stake depending upon her not coquetting, at all events, with you both. Women are so vain, and do so like to feel their power, that very few can resist playing with our affection, and then they are piqued if they cannot completely enslave us. Of course Adeline sees you are attached to her ; and if you do not declare yourself, she will assert her woman's nature, by flirting with some one else, and Murray will be too delighted. Many a heart is caught on the rebound ; so if you seriously think your happiness depends on her, do not delay to tell her so. She really appears a very amiable girl, besides being very lovely, and I think you will be fortunate if you get her ; therefore, my dear fellow, make the best use of your first opportunity."

As Vernon walked to the Priory, he thought

of all Stanley had said ; and although he had every reason to be satisfied with the result of their conversation, he felt vexed and annoyed. Stanley's doubting, rallying tone about women, hurt him ; he had such a warm heart, and all its best tender feelings were now called into action by his attachment to Adeline, that he could not bear to hear of her acting in the careless, heartless way to which Stanley had adverted.

He thought, too, of his friend Murray, and regretted that he should have happened to have crossed his path. He felt for him. " Yet he cannot love her as I do," was his comforting reflection, " or he would have acted very differently." But all painful thoughts were soon absorbed in the delightful reveries of a lover ; and when he reached the Priory, he had determined to follow Stanley's advice, and seek an explanation with Adeline at the first opportunity ; and visions tinged with the brightest hues of the hopes of an enthusiastic man who passionately loves, floated through his mind, and gave animation to his eye and buoyancy to his step.

The future ! how anxiously we watch its mysterious gates, endeavouring to gain a glimpse through some opening of the secrets within their portals !

## CHAPTER XIII.

Dost thou remember that place so lonely,  
A place for lovers, and for lovers only ?  
Where first I told thee all my secret sighs,  
And read my heart's sweet triumph in thine eyes.

T. MOORE.

“WHAT’S the order of the day, Vernon?” asked Stanley one morning as he met him riding in from the Priory as usual, on his way to the Harcourts.

“Mrs. Burton wants us all to go to the Fall, where she proposes to meet us; they seem to think this fine weather will not last long and are anxious for us to take advantage of it; will you join our party?”

“Willingly: how far is this place, it is one of the lions, I presume?”

“About three or four miles, I believe, it is very pretty; let us persuade the Harcourts to go, I dare say we shall have some little difficulty about it, for we have tried to plan an excursion to this identical place several times, but Mrs. Harcourt has always been afraid of rain, or damp, or something.”

“I should think she could not find any excuse for objecting this morning, with such a clear sky.”

“I hope not, for I have set my heart upon going to the Fall, they say it is quite a Swiss scene; you must come with me and talk the old lady over.”

“I am the worst fellow possible for such an undertaking, I should be sure to offend her, you will do better without me.”

“No, a combination of forces is always desirable, and another thing, I think your half sarcastic, half authoritative manner is rather successful with Mrs. Harcourt, she laughs at me and calls me very treasonable for preaching

rebellion; you must help me, Stanley, indeed."

"By all means, if you like it; but if she be very unreasonable, do not be surprised if I am not very polite, domestic tyranny is my abhorrence. I can see how things progress in that family, and who suffers most from the disagreeables."

When the young men arrived at the cottage, they found Marion and Adeline delighted with the plan. Mr. Harcourt soon gave his consent, and whether it was Stanley's few words of expostulation, or Vernon's earnest entreaties, or the impossibility of finding any plausible reason for declining Mrs. Burton's proposal, Mrs. Harcourt promised to go. A message was sent back to the Priory by Vernon's groom, and preparations were made for a long day in the woods.

Ponies were soon in readiness and they started without delay. The road was but a rude and rough one, it wound along the edge of a sharp declivity, at the bottom of which formed the river; the opposite bank was

covered with coppice-wood, among which the bright berries of the mountain ash were conspicuous; now and then tiny cottages peeped out among the trees and their well cultivated gardens enlivened the scene

As they advanced the view became wilder, a lofty height rose above them, and the narrow road twisted and turned among the woods, the gleams of sunshine upon the many-tinted foliage gave a brightness to its beauty and prevented them regretting the fading luxuriance of the departing summer. Autumn, thy richness is like the fulfilment of hope, but afterwards comes the cold, chill frost of winter!

Our party trotted merrily on, pausing now and then to catch a glimpse of the distant ocean as it appeared between the sloping woods, at last a turn in the road shut it out entirely; they then began to descend a narrow path till they came to the banks of the river. The grass was bright and soft, and the graceful fern waved its feathery stems in the breeze. Here they descended from their ponies; following

the course of the stream, at last they arrived at a spot where some oak and ash trees formed a convenient resting-place.

Here they found Mr. and Mrs. Burton expecting them, the pony-carriage being drawn up under the trees. There was a merry recognition, and luncheon was prepared before any exploring was commenced ; this was thoroughly enjoyed, and after it was concluded the young people strolled off together to admire the romantic scenery, leaving the older and more sedate ones to enjoy their gossip and biscuits together.

Marion had her sketch-book, and wished to make a rough drawing of the rustic bridge which was thrown across the stream. It was an inviting subject for the pencil, some large rocks interrupted the course of the river, and the water fell over them in a wild cascade, and then glided on in quiet stillness, under the shadow of the drooping boughs. Stanley offered to cut her pencils, and helping her down the bank, he found a seat for her, whence she could command the most picturesque view.



“How can you waste your time, this glorious day, Marion, in sketching?” exclaimed Adeline, “I like to roam about, and see all there is, not to sit quietly looking at one thing, and as to reminiscences of the past, that is nonsense, I never forget what I wish to remember.”

“But you forget that I like drawing, so that it is not a waste of time; but if you wish me to walk through the wood with you, I will come, though I dare say Mr. Stanley or Captain Vernon will accompany you.”

“I should like a ramble of all things, Miss Harcourt, do stay and make your sketch, and as for Stanley, he looks half asleep already; I am sure he would be a very bad companion: if you are bent upon exploring, let us go, Miss Adeline, we should only interrupt these quiet people.”

Adeline laughed and crossed the bridge, and she and Vernon were soon lost in the wood. The little paths traversed each other in all directions, they sometimes followed one and sometimes another, till they found themselves

by the water's edge again, but far up the stream. The swallows flitted rapidly through the air, dipping their snowy breasts in the rippling wavelets, the grasshopper chirped among the wavy grass, an occasional note of a bird might be heard in the underwood, everything else was quiet and calm.

Adeline sat down to rest herself under a drooping ash-tree, and looked up to Vernon with an exclamation of delight at the beauty of the scene. He threw himself by her side, and imbibed all the fresh loveliness around him. He could scarcely answer her lively remarks, or give a reply to her animated appreciation of the scene. His few words were uttered in such expressive tones, and his eye rested on her with such an ardent gaze, that at last she grew silent and thoughtful, but a woman has always the tact to appear more self-possessed at such moments than a man.

Vernon's heart was beating high, and his brow flushed deeply, while he watched her varying cheek, as she twisted the long leaves of the water-flowers.

“How beautifully those lilies float upon the

rippling waves," she said at last, "rising and falling with every motion."

"They are like the feelings of man, agitated by hope and fear—agitated as mine are at this moment. Oh, Adeline! can you not guess how deeply, how intensely, I love you, how my whole happiness is bound up in you? have you had no idea of my feelings since I have been here? may I dare hope—speak one word, will you be mine?"

He took her hand, she raised her eyes to his for one moment, that look was enough. "Adeline, my own love," he murmured, as he pressed her to his heart.

There they sat, her hand in his, in silent happiness, forgetful of all, but their own rapturous sensations; when Vernon told her of all his love, all his devotion, she confessed that it was not unreturned. Oh, love! thou brightest and most entrancing of emotions, what a glowing tint thou infusest into Nature's loveliest pictures! Thou wild, absorbing passion, how thou wast bounding in Vernon's heart, as he sat by that constantly murmuring stream, holding Adeline's fair hand, gazing in her eyes, and

reading there those feelings which she could not speak ; what ardent, burning words were on his lips, but he did not utter them, he feared to disturb the bliss, the happiness of that hour. At last she rose to retrace her steps.

“ One instant, love, let us take a farewell look at this beautiful scene, which will dwell in my memory while life endures.”

She turned, and as he drew her arm through his, looked round on the bending woods and rippling stream, and in silence left the spot. With slow steps they returned to the bridge and found Marion had just completed her sketch, and a very spirited delineation had she produced. Stanley’s quick eye was bent for a moment on Adeline and Vernon as they crossed the stream ; he felt satisfied that he had not been wrong in his conjectures, indeed a less keen observer than he was, might have read the tale in Adeline’s downcast eye, and in the radiant look of happiness on Vernon’s brow.

“ Have you made any discoveries, Fred ?” he asked, as they approached, “ you have had time for important ones.”

"We have had a lovely walk, but as to discoveries, the woods are much like those we crossed this morning."

Adeline sat down in silence by Marion, and looked over her drawing, while Vernon, whispered to Stanley :

"Congratulate me, Arthur, all is right."

Stanley shook his hand with friendly warmth and smiled as he answered :

"I thought I could not be mistaken."

Marion announced that her drawing was finished. Vernon hastened to take her sketch-book, and offering her his arm, walked along the bank with her, and claimed her congratulations, as he told her what had passed between him and Adeline. He was gratified by the earnest and cordial feeling with which she received the intelligence, and by the warm affection with which she spoke of her sister ; and when they turned and joined her and Stanley, Adeline felt assured of Marion's sympathy by the tender pressure of her hand.

They went in search of the elders of the

party, and found them still sitting in the shade, so different are the tastes of young and old ! the latter are content with quiet and rest, engaged by memories of the past, while the former seek for action and excitement. Marion's sketch was much admired, and Mr. Burton exclaimed :

“ You have made good use of your time, Miss Harcourt. What have you been doing, Adeline ? ”

Rather a deep blush mounted on Adeline's cheek, at this question, she answered :

“ I have been roaming in the woods, gathering the flowers, and looking for nuts. ”

“ Have you found any *kearnels*, or do you content yourself with less exalted discoveries ? ”

Adeline did not or would not hear this facetious remark of the old gentleman, but began telling her father of the beautiful still pools in the higher part of the stream ; for he was a fisherman, and she knew he would be interested in any information relative to his favourite amusement.

They began to think of returning homewards, for the lengthening shadows spoke of the approach of sunset.

"I am sure we are very much indebted to you, Mrs. Burton, for a very agreeable day," said Marion; "parties of pleasure do not always pass so harmoniously; the weather has been propitious, and our halting-place surpassingly lovely."

Vernon said in a low voice to Stanley:

"I suppose I must make my confession to Mr. Harcourt some time soon; that is the disagreeable part of the affair."

"Have it over as soon as you can; I will try and give you an opportunity as we ride home. It will be nothing; he is a reasonable man, and a kind-hearted one. You will soon understand one another; and there can be nothing unpleasant about settlements, for your fortune is ample, even if he gives his daughter nothing."

Vernon turned away, annoyed by Stanley's abrupt allusion to money matters; he had not thought of them, but shrunk from being ob-

liged to speak calmly and explicitly of his feelings to Mr. Harcourt. He rode by Adeline for some time, until by some little manœuvring of Stanley, Mr. Harcourt joined them. The road was too narrow for them all to ride abreast; therefore Vernon fell back beside Mr. Harcourt. He soon told him his tale, and had no reason to complain of the way it was received. Indeed Vernon was one of his great favourites; his frank, open-heartedness and high, noble feelings had quite won his heart, and he had no secret misgiving when he shook his hand, and said:

“Take her, Captain Vernon; she is a treasure, but you will value her.”

They had a happy evening; perhaps Adeline and Vernon were rather quieter than usual, but it was not from any diminution in their pleasure. Deep feelings are seldom very demonstrative; when the heart is speaking, the voice is mute; how seldom the under-current of the soul is understood! Few can comprehend the causes which influence us; and the world is but too ready to give the least kind interpretation to our actions.



Perhaps this is one of the hardest trials to which we can be subjected, to have our motives doubted, and to be suspected of interested or selfish views, when we are conscious that such suspicions are unjust. But this must be borne patiently and enduringly, the path of life must be trodden firmly and unshrinkingly, even though it be strewn with flints; the mountain must be climbed, though mists and clouds obscure its summit.

Vernon and Adeline strolled about the lovely lanes of Fenton day after day; their interest and pleasure in these walks seemed inexhaustible. The slightest word, every look, has an inexpressible charm to lovers.

Stanley often found an opportunity for a quiet chat with Marion during these rambles.

“Do you remember my telling you once that I thought your sister would be a flirt?”

“Perfectly; it was the first evening I ever saw you. But you also said, that that catastrophe might be averted if she ever became truly attached.”

“I did not think that that would have

occurred so soon. I really believe Vernon is the very man to win her affections, and I am sure he is worthy of them. He is giving himself up now to all the fascinating influences of love. Poor fellow ! I hope nothing will occur to waken him suddenly from his Elysium."

"Why should you always think of the gloomy side of affairs ? Why do you forebode some interruption to their happiness ? Let us hope they will not have any greater evils than what must inevitably be the inheritance of mortality."

"I was not thinking of any sudden misfortune, but of the gradual disappointment which creeps over one so often, after indulging in such dreams of happiness as Vernon revels in — of the cureless anguish he would feel should Adeline change ; but I really beg your pardon for talking thus to you," he said, as he saw an expression of pain on Marion's countenance. "You must think me very rude or very thoughtless, but I do not know how it is, that I find myself telling you ideas which no one else dreams I have."

“I am only sorry for your own sake, Mr. Stanley, that you should have such an opinion of women collectively, as to imagine they must almost inevitably change. I hope and believe Captain Vernon’s experience will a little shake the firmness of your present code of faith.”

“Perhaps it may—I shall be glad to be converted. It would make me far happier if I could efface many of my experiences, and believe in the pure and lovely dreams of which you tell me.”

And thus did Stanley talk; and though Marion was often hurt by his harsh judgments, and bitter remarks, yet her woman’s heart was soothed and gratified by his confiding his feelings to her. Let a woman but fancy she is adding to a man’s happiness, that he feels more comfortable in her society, that her sympathy is pleasing to him, and she soon forgets any personal slight, and forgets any personal annoyance. Let her but think she is of use to him, of use in aiding him in gaining the victory in the struggles for the triumph of his ambition,

of use in alleviating his griefs, and he will soon become dear to her.

And if she has been privileged to make any sacrifice for him, how much closer, how indissoluble becomes the bond ! For there is something in woman's nature, which makes her not only capable of a sacrifice, but almost eager for it ! Look at her in her religious aspirations—that form of faith which demands the most complete abnegation of self, the most complete renunciation of her own dearest hopes, the total extinction of her deepest feelings—does she not yield herself to its dictates, and subject herself to all the rigour of its rules ?

It is true, that the imagination of woman often is the secret of her religion, but it is this sentiment of self-sacrifice which is the most powerful incentive. Men seldom understand this idea, and in their cold, selfish policy calculate that because a woman once loves them, she loves on for ever, regardless of their carelessness and heartlessness ; that they may neglect, may scorn her tenderest feelings, yet will always receive the same affection. They are

mistaken. It is true there is a deep well of love in a woman's heart, which will gush out in fresh springs at the return of affection, that symptoms of regret for past ill-conduct will bury the wounds of the spirit in oblivion ; but they cannot receive the same unshackled feelings, the same voluntary, exhaustless, free, unasked-for love, as they had before they taught the bitter lesson of cruel indifference or harsh tyranny.

They will have perhaps, much more consideration, much more care than they are conscious of meriting, but they do not know how often it is woman's sense of her right to self-sacrifice, which procures this kindness for them. Man, with all his stirring passions, all his absorbing interests, amid all his hard battles for fame, for wealth, for aggrandisement, amid his anxieties to gratify his ambition, thinks little and but too often, cares less for the inner world in which woman lives ; all those objects which are of paramount importance in her life, all the inner springs of hopes and fears which agitate her, he recks nothing of,

and the more earnest, the more intense her feelings and struggles, the less he knows of them, for those who have strength to feel acutely, to suffer deeply, have strength to endure patiently and to bear silently.

Something of all this was stealing over Marion in her intercourse with Stanley ; unconscious of it herself, she was interested in endeavouring to fathom his character, to account for the sudden changes of his moods, to divine the cause of his bitter sarcasms and his keen suspicion. The shadow of woman's experiences was gathering round her, perhaps only to bring the brightness of life into still clearer relief, to enhance its highest enjoyments by a dim contrast, and perhaps to chill her warm impulses and eager aspirations with the dull cloud of disappointment.

There is always so much doubt and uncertainty in watching the dawn and early progress of an earnest affection. The increased responsibilities which new ties entail, the fresh influences they bring upon the heart, the new impetus which urges the soul towards good, or towards evil throughout eternity.

Love, thou art indeed a potent spell, an all-powerful transmutor ; a vivifying, purifying influence ; the connecting ladder between heaven and earth, which like that of the patriarch, had its foundation in the skies, and on which bright spirits traced their lingering steps ; thou hast the breath of heaven upon thee, and scatterest it upon the tearful and sorrowing children of mortality, to give them a faint foretaste of the bliss of the coming, yet dimly-outlined Future !

## CHAPTER XIV

There is a gentler element, and man  
May breathe it with a calm unruffled soul,  
And drink its living waters till his heart  
Is pure—and this is human happiness.

N. P. WILLIS.

WITH what different feeling we view old familiar scenes, when any important event has occurred to us! How it renews our grief when we stand again in the room endeared to us by memories connected with one who is numbered with the dead! whose voice still seems sounding near us, his image called up vividly before us by associations! How painful it is to gaze upon some lovely landscape, which we



have admired with one dearer than words can express, when that loved one is far away, how cold and melancholy every object looks, which was once so bright and beautiful !

But when we have an increase to our happiness, when life has gained additional charms, and has received a new impulse, how we turn to the smallest trifles and find them invested with fresh interest, and wonder how they could have appeared insignificant to us. Some such feelings as these occurred to Adeline, when she found herself again domiciled in town. She had learnt new experiences since she had left it, her heart had imbibed new impressions, one chord had been struck with which all her being harmonized. She loved ardently and intensely, as one of her imaginative, impassioned nature loves. All was tinted with the brightness of her own spirit. When I saw her after her return, I guessed the history of her life ; it was written so legibly in the clear sunny glance, the happy, beaming smile.

I liked to see her with Vernon ; he seemed to regard her as some being of another sphere,

as something almost too tender and beautiful for him. There was a tinge of chivalrous, romantic devotion in his love for her; it was to me like a dream, or a poem, to see his looks full of affection, to watch his gentle attention to every movement; it was so unlike what we meet with in this utilitarian material age.

How he loved her merry, lively hours, when everything was an object for her mirth! how he enjoyed her clear, silvery laugh! but her calmer, gentler moods, how much dearer were they to him!

I used sometimes to walk with them and Marion. I am very fond of young people, and when they will make me in any way able to contribute to their happiness, I am delighted. Vernon and Adeline were emblems of the bright and summer-side of life. On they went, with their sails fanned by gentle, balmy breezes. I do not think they ever thought of the possibility of a storm arising. I used to wonder sometimes how they would stem the tide of sorrow; but who would breathe of such

stern things to them, who were now wrapped in the bright flush of happiness ?

I could not, nor do I, see the use of needlessly disturbing those halcyon dreams which are in themselves but too transient. It is not every one who can fight bravely through the battles of life, subject themselves to its stern realities, and yet build their own fabric of happiness from the ruin of their dreams, and after all their struggles, still preserve their love for the beautiful, unimpaired by suspicion, and untinged by murmurs. To those who can do this, disappointment and grief may come ; they will not leave them comfortless ; we need not shrink from invading their dreamy bliss ; they will create a more real and enduring satisfaction ; to such characters life would lose its significance, did it not bring its trials.

But to those more common temperaments who have but little energy and determination, who are easily amalgamated to the fashions of the world, let *them* keep their visions of purity, of happiness, as long as they can ; disturb them once, and they will not return ; let them live on

while they may in an atmosphere less sullied than that they will breathe when they descend into the working world, amid its temptations and trials.

Happy are those who can preserve their early freshness of character, their warm yearnings after the good and true, in spite of the cold heartlessness of society.

Adeline seemed very happy at this time; she knew she was Vernon's idol, the object on which his best affections were centred, and such a consciousness has always charms for a woman. Every one sympathized with her, for her manners were so winning that every one who knew her was captivated by her. There are some beings on whom seem showered all the powers of pleasing, all that charms and attaches our feelings, and the less gifted look on, and wonder why it should be, and perhaps repine at the neglect they often meet with.

Regret not these transitory, illusive attractions, they are but too often attended with a restless longing for the excitement of society, for oppor-

tunities for captivation, which the quieter and less obtrusive escape. Trust the experience of one who has lived long and seen much, and who tells you, that it is far better to win the true affections of one noble-hearted being, though that be the only one who appreciates you, than to possess the admiration and superficial smiles and regards of a world.

The influence of one is for good, and will last for ever, like the fructifying and penetrating power of the sun, but the other resembles the cold, fruitless light of the distant stars, which may amuse and please us without our feeling either better or happier for their rays.

Adeline was always sure of the warmest sympathy from Marion in all her feelings, she had never met with unkindness from her. Marion was very often with me during the winter of her sister's engagement, for Mrs. Colston was very fond of her, and prevailed upon her to visit her frequently, and I was constantly there.

She seemed very thoughtful, but not sad—it

was rather the tranquillity of the dawn of some new and absorbing sensation, than any painful or perplexing circumstance. But no one could do more than guess at Marion's feelings, for she never spoke of herself; this reserve was her greatest fault, and with some people, a grievous one. Mrs. Harcourt resented it especially, for she was very fond of knowing everything, and managing everything, and Marion's total silence of her own feelings irritated her.

But this is a failing which often proceeds from excessive sensitiveness of character, which shrinks from any misunderstanding of its peculiarities, and sometimes from that rare unselfishness which would not obtrude its own feelings upon others. With what a delicate hand should such a temperament be reined—any harshness, or rough attempt to gain its confidence only drives it more closely into its own recesses. I wished Marion might soon find some one in whom she could confide, and who would value her as she so truly merited; but I knew time must elapse before she could become attached to any one.

Stanley used to see her occasionally, but no one could judge of his feelings, so variable were his tones and moods. I suspected that Marion knew best the key to his character, but even she was often bewildered in doubt, which perhaps accounted for her occasional abstraction.

One evening Stanley dined at the Colstons when Marion was there, and her happy expression, as he talked with her, quite pleased me; it was a look which was inspired by the soul itself, and made her countenance appear quite illumined.

Murray was of the party, and remarked to me how well Miss Harcourt looked, some faint idea of the cause of her animation might perhaps have occurred to his penetrating observation. He had only just returned from Germany, and had not seen any of his friends. I heard him ask Stanley where Adeline was.

"I believe she is at home; I suppose Vernon is dining there, they have plenty to talk of, and arrange just now," was the answer.

I saw rather a startled expression cross

Murray's face at this remark, but he added carelessly :

"What is to be done ? some military ball in prospect, where Vernon is to be a hero ?"

"Have you not heard the news of their engagement ? Do not pretend to be so ignorant, Murray."

"Indeed, I did not know of it ; well, I think they will suit very well." He then turned away, and I fancied I saw a slight frown on his brow ; however, he was far too complete a master of himself to allow his feelings to be apparent, or his curiosity to be noticed.

Marion sung that night with more than her usual expression ; even Stanley, who was generally a careless listener to music, was rivetted by the pathos of her voice as she uttered those beautiful lines of Moore's "All that's bright must fade, the brightest still the fleetest," and a shade of deep feeling was in Murray's eye ; he was extremely fond of music, not perhaps as the scientific love it, for he was utterly ignorant of its intricate harmonies and combinations ; but as it appealed to the heart,



and interested the feelings and passions he thoroughly enjoyed it, and on this particular evening, Marion's melancholy songs chimed in with the temper of his mind.

This is to me the great charm of music, to have the sensations and ideas you are experiencing expressed in its thrilling sounds; to have the feelings interpreted by its language.

Marion returned home early, which rather broke up our little party. Stanley and Murray walked to their chambers together, they had not met for some time, and there was plenty for them to discuss; however, they remained silent for some time. Stanley was thinking of Marion, and recalling every word and look, endeavouring to find some ground on which to persuade himself that she was not totally indifferent to him. His fancy, his hopes bid him not despair, but his exacting reason asked for some proof, something more certain than the tone of a voice, or the deepening colour of a cheek, before he should indulge in bright dreams of the future.

Murray was musing on the rapid progress of Adeline's fate ; a few months ago, she had not known Vernon, and in a few more she was to be his wife ; he felt a slight uneasiness, a tinge of bitterness at the thought of her engagement, for notwithstanding all his flirtations, Murray had contrived to become rather interested about Adeline. I do not mean that he loved her ; he had had too many *affaires de cœur* to be very susceptible now ; men of his habits and stamp seldom have any very deep attachment, and a disappointment is quickly forgotten, for it makes but a slight impression. Murray had some little curiosity, however, on the subject ; he, therefore, aroused Stanley from his reverie, by saying :

“ I suppose this affair of Vernon's was managed at Fenton ? I remember his being anxious to go there. Not that I had any idea of matters being so serious. Of course he is desperately in love ? ”

“ You are right : I never saw a man more completely enslaved. He never seems happy but in Adeline's society. He is a happy fellow,

for his time is at his own disposal ; and he can therefore devote it all to her."

"And do you think Adeline really returns Vernon's affections? she has not known him long."

"I am sure he is lord paramount of her heart ; and as to the shortness of their acquaintance, you must know very well that time is, after all, only comparative in such cases. Vernon had made some impression before he left town ; and a little country intercourse developed it. When I arrived at Fenton, I found him quite domiciled at the Harcourts ; and soon after, he told his tale."

"Vernon is a lucky fellow, for she is a delightful, fascinating girl. He will not take her to India, of course?"

"I fancy not ; but nothing is arranged yet. She would go with him to the antipodes if he asked her. However, from what Fred told me yesterday, I think they contemplate living in the country."

"When does the wedding come off?"

"They talk of the early spring ; and I think

it is very likely that will be the time. But you must call on the Harcourts and hear for yourself. You used to be very intimate there, but I do not know how Vernon will like your renewing your confidential chats with Adeline."

"He need not alarm himself; I shall not interfere with him. But jealousy is an old-world failing—no one takes the trouble to be jealous now."

"Don't they? I am not sure I should escape, if I saw any woman I loved, talking to any one but me, with the interest Adeline used to converse with you?"

"Then I was not mistaken, Stanley, when I flattered myself we were tolerable friends; I could have loved her, but that is over; I shall not call just yet, still, it is absurd to delay it, for I am not going to play the disconsolate lover."

"That would be playing a part, I think, Murray, for you will soon amuse yourself with some one else. You have had so many escapes, that you do not recollect them very long, and poor Adeline deserves a better fate than to be your favourite for a season, and then forgotten for ever."

“Nonsense, Arthur, do you think I am going on in that way all my life, that I can remain satisfied with the mere phantom of happiness; how do you know that I should merely have had a passing regard for Adeline Harcourt? Why should I not have been in Vernon’s situation?”

“Don’t excite yourself, my dear fellow, I was only reasoning from analogy, judging you by your past proceedings; you have hitherto contrived to content yourself with flirtations, which is, I suppose, the translation of your ‘phantom of happiness,’ and I had no reason to believe you had quarrelled with your old habits; and as to your finding yourself in Vernon’s position, you could not do it—you are more hackneyed in the world—you would not bring the same heart and sincerity to your assistance, which are the best ingredients in love, and tell immensely with a girl like Adeline.”

“You are tolerably polite Stanley, but because I have amused myself in society, in my time, am I never to be in earnest?”

“I really cannot say, you best know your own powers of desperation; but if you ask my

candid opinion, I confess, that I do not think you could keep very constant for a long time ; you are capital for carrying the breach by eager and rapid assaults, but I do not think a protracted siege is suited to your capabilities."

"You will see some day, I shall turn over a new leaf. You are tolerably correct in your observations, though you scarcely do me justice. I have been spoilt by the women, and now they blame me for results which they have caused."

"Now waive that subject, Murray, you know you have a lurking vein of conceit in you, and dearly love to assert the women are the cause of it ; you should make allowances for natural feelings and susceptibilities, as well as for external circumstances."

"You saw the Harcourts at Fenton, did you not ? Do you often go to them now ?"

"I arrived a short time before they left, but I was not there long. I have but little time for calling now, so that unless I dine there or meet them in the evening, I seldom see them."

"Marion looked remarkably well to-night,

she is an uncommonly nice girl; was I wrong in what I told you of her?"

"No, your description was more correct than they generally are; I like her, she is so unaffected and sincere, she will miss Adeline terribly."

"I must talk to her about it. I enjoy a little conversation with her, you know she feels all she says, and that is a great charm; I have known her some time, and have seen her very often, but I have found I liked her better the more I know of her."

"And yet you preferred Adeline, was not that a mistake, Murray?"

"It may prove one, but much as I esteem and like Marion, hers is not quite the style to enthral me. I always had a taste for the imposing and striking beauties, and Adeline is lovely; there is an indescribable expression about her, which I never saw in any one else."

"There is, I admire her very much, but it is as I admire some of those wondrously beautiful tropical plants, which I would scarcely exert myself to gather, while I could not pass

a simple lily of the valley, without stooping to steal a blossom."

"You and I differ in this as in most other things; we shall see who is right as we pass through life, but if you make a mistake, it will effect you more than it will me, for I can throw off influences and impressions with more ease than you can."

"I believe you are right, and it is the fear of taking this false step, which makes me hesitate and demur, when most men would dauntlessly cross the rubican of their fate."

Murray looked inquiringly at Stanley, but he received no explanation, he put his own interpretation upon his words, and thought that his two most intimate friends were in a rapid progress towards a similar consummation.

"I shall try a call upon the Harcourts soon," he said. "When does Vernon generally make his appearance?"

"Soon after luncheon, I fancy, do you want to meet him?"

"I think not, but if he goes so early, I cannot avoid him, well, I shall take my chance."



I shall soon meet them together, so a little delay is of no consequence."

"You will agree with me, that Vernon makes an admirable lover, the character suits him wonderfully; he really seems to adore the very air Adeline breathes, but he does not make a fool of himself for the benefit of the public, which is a most despicable part for a man to play."

"Adeline is not a woman to require that, she is too proud for such common-place absurdity—*à propos* to that, I saw the Brandons in Germany. They had met Warenne during their travels, and had managed to attach him to their party. How they did parade their prey about for the inspection of the idle gossips in the promenade, and Warenne being given to the making of pretty speeches, was soon considered to be in a fair way being irrevocably doomed."

"That is just what I should imagine of those Brandons. They are odious people, conceited, manœuvring and selfish. I hope never to see them again, they always put me out of temper; I do dislike pretty faces with no

expression, or at best with a self-satisfied, unchanging smile, I would infinitely rather see a woman positively plain, or even ugly if you like, with some little variation in her features, there would be something to interest one."

"But the Brandons get on wonderfully in society, and seem general favourites, and they are certainly ladylike, amusing and pretty—in fact, what may be termed unexceptionable."

"You should add, they are likely to have large fortunes, for I think without the last characteristic, they would be voted egotistical and pert; until their uncle, old Grotes died, one never heard of the Brandons, but now they are determined to remind the world that they are in being, for go where you will, you are sure to meet them; at balls, at *fêtes*, driving or riding, most elaborately equipped *à l'amazone*, a style in which they do not seem quite at ease, for to see them canter in the Park reminds me of automata, the reins and whip, held in the riding-master's most approved manner."

"You are severe, Stanley, but I agree with

you that they look less well in riding attire than in any other way ; they are certainly determined not to lose any opportunity for display.”

“Just imagine in what a whirl of excitement they move ; they can have no time for anything but their toilette and society, their conversation bears the stamp of their existence ; it wearies and disgusts me, such attempts at wit and repartee, such ‘got up’ remarks on books and paintings, nothing but flippancy and emptiness ; they do not dare to be genuine, I can describe them most accurately by an expressive, but not particularly elegant phrase to be applied to ladies—they are regular ‘shams.’”

“A rapid sketch certainly, one may guess at the likeness, although it is rather caricatured. I do not think they are so heartless as you fancy, they are too young to have arrived at that stage.”

“I am bound to congratulate you, if you have discovered the avenue to their hearts, I am afraid you must have found them rather diminutive ; for age has nothing to do with

their faults, an unchanging course of prosperity, gratification of all one's fancies, rapidly produces the effects of which I have hinted ; the Brandons appear to me complete spoiled children of the world. If you have a fancy to reclaim them, do not let me interfere with your taste, but I must say I do not envy you."

"I have no such idea, it would be far too much trouble ; I only exclaimed because you were overcharging the colouring of your picture, good-night. I suppose I shall meet you at the club to-morrow ?"

"Yes, but it will be late, for I have a consultation before dinner about those detestable forgeries, which is rather a serious matter. Good-night."

## CHAPTER XV.

But, oh! estrange her once, it boots not how,  
By wrong or silence, anything that tells  
A change has come upon your tenderness,  
And there is not a high place out of heaven  
Her pride o'ermastereth not.

N. P. WILLIS.

ONE afternoon when I was calling at the Harcourts, we heard a knock at the door. Adeline was expecting Vernon, for most unusually she had not seen him for two or three days; a shade of disappointment, therefore, was on her countenance, when, instead of him, Murray was announced.

He sat down, and began chatting in his pleasant, agreeable manner, and telling us of his autumn trip to Germany and giving us

many anecdotes of our acquaintance whom he had met. In reply to his animated account of the delights of the Rhine, Marion said :

“ We spent our time most charmingly at Fenton, I assure you, I cannot imagine any place more lovely ; and then having a house, we escaped the disagreeables of hotels, and all the minor evils of travelling on the continent.”

“ I have often heard of its beauties, Vernon used to rave about it ; *à propos* to him, I met him just now in Piccadilly with an uncommonly pretty woman on his arm, I wonder who it could be, for he has no sister.”

“ Perhaps it was his cousin, I know he expected one of them in town soon,” said Marion.

“ No, it could not have been either of them, for I know them both, and they are very plain ; this lady appeared about four or five-and-twenty, and was a very striking looking person. She had rather a foreign air, for her Indian shawl was arranged with a grace that few English women possess.”

Adeline's cheek had flushed brightly when

Murray first spoke of Vernon, but as he described his companion, I saw a slight frown contract her brows; but as Murray turned to address her, she endeavoured to conceal any sign of irritation, and began her usual style of conversation, but there was a restlessness in her eye and manner, which would have told a less acute observer than Murray, that she was vexed and annoyed.

His usually gentle and polished manner had almost a tinge of tenderness for Adeline, his eye rested on her with a half-appealing, half-reproachful expression, but she was too much engrossed by her thoughts of Vernon to remark it. Murray paid a long visit, and several times referred to Vernon, he had exquisite tact, and could bring forward a subject in the most masterly way, and make observations which could not easily be forgotten.

When he left, Adeline said to Marion :

“ I will go with you to Mrs. Colston’s. I do not intend waiting any longer for Frederic.”

“ You had better stay a little while, he will be so disappointed to find you out, if he calls.”

“ I cannot help it, he knows I have expected

him, and if he be amusing himself elsewhere, I see no reason why I should not do the same, do come and put on your shawl."

"If you wish it, I will certainly go with you, but it is a pity, and as for Frederic's amusing himself away from you, you know perfectly well that he cannot do that. I am sure he has some business of importance, or be detained by some unforeseen circumstance, or you would have seen him."

"Very important business truly, to be walking with a lady ; I suppose he is fond of variety, however, he will not treat me in this way long, I can tell him."

And thus saying, Adeline left the room with a prouder step than usual.

"You had better not say anything further on the subject, Marion," I observed, "she is hurt and vexed, and suspects the Captain of neglecting and trifling with her, nothing you can say will do any good."

"But how can she doubt him, just for what Mr. Murray said, I cannot understand it, she should have more faith in him."

"She has not your unsuspecting, confiding



nature ; now, go out with her, and say as little as you can about it."

Another day passed without Adeline seeing or hearing anything of Vernon, she was extremely indignant, and refused to listen to any of Marion's suggestions in his favour. The Harcourts went to a party one evening during this absence of Vernon's, where they met Murray and Stanley.

Adeline danced, and seemed in the most overflowing spirits ; but Marion knew this was only a mask to conceal her vexation and annoyance. Murray paid her most undisguised attentions, and she appeared to receive them without any discouragement. I saw Stanley's eye rest on her with an expression of mingled scorn and surprise, he turned to Marion and said :

"I was not mistaken ; you must own your sister is flirting *a little* to-night, and with Murray too. I wonder what Fred would say if he could see her?"

"Indeed, I am very unhappy about Adeline ; I know she is acting in this way because she is annoyed with Captain Vernon."

Marion then told Stanley of the state of things, not forgetting Murray's description of his *rencontre* with Vernon.

"And does your sister think this a sufficient reason to justify her interpreting Fred's absence into neglect of her?"

"I am afraid so. I cannot persuade her to wait patiently till he can explain himself, as I am sure he will do most satisfactorily. But she doubts him; and as I have often told you, suspicion is the destroyer of affection."

"Perhaps I ought not to blame Adeline as I feel inclined to do, for I am afraid I should act much in the same way under similar circumstances. But I am sorry for Vernon, knowing how truly he loves her."

"I wish Mr. Murray had not happened to be here this evening. I do not think he is acting rightly."

"You can scarcely blame him, if your sister smiles as she is now doing upon his attentions. He is a fool on his own account, to seek her society so much; for with his feelings for her, as she is engaged to his friend, my opinion is, the less he sees of her the better."

“I am so sorry for Adeline to act in this way. It is very wrong to encourage her feelings of pride and suspicion.”

“And would you not be annoyed and anxious were you in such a position?”

“No, indeed, I should not, Mr. Stanley, for I should feel convinced that some unforeseen event had detained Captain Vernon. I should not have even a shadow of doubt of him; for if I once loved, I should have such entire and perfect confidence, that I do not think anything would shake it, and reports of acquaintance would be less than nothing to me. How I wish Adeline could feel this, she would be so much happier.”

Stanley gazed on Marion's countenance, which was slightly flushed by the earnestness with which she spake, and murmured:

“What a blessing to be loved in such a way.”

Marion turned to her mother, who was waiting to go home, and they all left the room. As they were putting on their shawls, Stanley said in a low voice to Adeline:

“When I see Vernon, shall I tell him how well you were amused this evening?”

“Tell him what you choose, Mr. Stanley, I am indifferent,” she answered, as she took Murray’s offered arm, and left the house. She threw herself back in the carriage, as if exhausted with fatigue, and seemed as if she wished to avoid any conversation. When they reached home, she found a tiny note from Vernon, which she eagerly opened, and then read it to Marion with affected indifference. It was but a few lines, evidently written in the greatest haste. He said :

“My dearest love,

“I am overwhelmed with engagements of an unexpected nature ; I have not a moment to myself, or I should have seen you. You must know how very anxious I am to do so. I cannot explain matters, for I have a long story to tell you when we meet, which I hope will be the day after to-morrow. Till then, adieu.

“Ever your devotedly attached,

“F V.”

“I am so glad he has written, dearest Ade-

line ; I felt sure some business must have kept him away."

"Nonsense, Marion, what can he have to do with any lady's business, it is only some excuse ; he might have called if he liked, and such a hurried note, do you suppose I am satisfied with it?"

"Indeed, Adeline, I think you are very unreasonable ; you have no right to doubt Captain Vernon, you know how entirely he loves you, and after his note, it is ungenerous in the extreme to talk as you do, and I am sure you will regret it bye and bye."

"Mr. Murray says he is a terrible flirt, so I dare say this is nothing unusual."

"I must say I think Mr. Murray is the last man who should talk about another person flirting, for he is considered to be tolerably well acquainted with the art himself, and I was sorry to see you so much with him this evening."

"I was not much inclined for talking with strangers, but a chat with an old friend like him amused me ; he is very entertaining."

"I would not annoy you, dearest, for worlds ;

but you must let me tell you that lookers-on might say you were particularly pleased with Mr. Murray, and Captain Vernon's friends might regret this."

Adeline thought of the few words Stanley had said to her at parting, and blushing deeply, said hastily :

"I cannot help their concern, it is no affair of theirs ; good-night, Marion," and the sisters parted, Adeline to indulge her irritated feelings, and Marion to grieve for this determined spirit of suspicious pride.

The next morning brought no change in affairs. Adeline pursued her usual employments with well-maintained indifference, and prepared for a drive with apparent alacrity.

Mrs. Harcourt was executing some commission in a shop in Regent Street, during which time the girls remained in the carriage ; Marion was talking to Adeline about Vernon, and reminding her of the happy days she had spent with him, of all his thoughtfulness for her, and of the many proofs he had shewn of his affection.

"You must not forget all this, dearest," she

said, "and blame him so bitterly because you do not understand the motives of his present conduct ; you must cultivate one of the mediæval virtues—faith—and trust to time to develope the mystery ; do not doubt him, that is all I ask."

Just as Marion said this, a brougham drove close to them : its course being impeded by an immense waggon which was crossing the street, it was kept for a few minutes beside their carriage. Marion looked at Adeline, whose cheek was crimsoned with excitement, and was convinced that she had recognized one of the occupants of the little vehicle. For Vernon was seated there with a very serious, earnest expression upon his countenance ; he was conversing so intently that he never even looked up at the carriage, near which he passed, nor raised his eyes from his companion, who certainly was a most pleasing looking woman, far more attractive than falls to the lot of most people.

After the brougham drove on, Adeline said :

" I suppose now, you will not think it necessary to tell me that my doubts of Frederic are

unjust. I hope you saw his look of interest, it was very becoming !”

“Hush, Adeline, you must not talk in this way, Captain Vernon was evidently deeply engaged in less agreeable conversation than you are thinking of; he looked very pale and worried do reserve your sarcasms until you know something more certain.”

“I want to know nothing; he has not shewn bad taste I must confess, for the lady fully merits Mr. Murray’s encomiums, she is very handsome, and judging by her eyes, seemed to approve of her escort.”

“She looked very sad and anxious, do exert some of your usual generosity, and think more kindly of them both. You will not have to exercise your patience very long, for he promised to see you to-morrow.”

“His promises are nothing to me, I think I am going to Mademoiselle Melanie’s in the afternoon.”

Marion sighed and said no more, hoping that Adeline would be less impracticable on the morrow.

She was still resolved to go, and notwith-



standing Marion's entreaties that she would remain, she went out in the carriage. Marion being determined that Vernon should find some one at home, declined to accompany her. Mrs. Harcourt and Adeline had not been gone very long before Vernon came in. After he had shaken hands with Marion, he inquired eagerly where Adeline was, and seemed sadly disappointed when he heard she was out.

"She will not be long, I hope," said Marion ; "she is with mamma. Will you not wait and see her ?"

"I cannot stay long, for I have some very important business, and must meet some people about it in the city in an hour's time ; but if you think Adeline will return before then, I will gladly wait ; it seems so long since I saw her !"

Marion hesitated whether she should give Vernon any idea of Adeline's suspicions, or trust to the hope of their vanishing before she saw him ; but when she remembered the very slight chance there was of this being the case, she thought it was better to give him a hint about the thing.

"I am almost afraid she will be away longer than that. When can you come again?"

"I hope to finish my business this evening, and then I shall be free. I shall have a long explanation to give Adeline for my playing truant, but she must know how my absence has vexed me; but I could not enter into any particulars before, because after all it was not my affair, but that of some one else."

"Do come as soon as you can, Captain Vernon, for——"

Marion's hesitation struck him.

"Why, what is the matter, Marion?" he asked.

"Adeline is rather fanciful sometimes, and she is hurt by your long absence, particularly as you passed us yesterday in a carriage with a lady, and did even see her."

"Nay, you cannot mean that she doubts me; that she is annoying herself on such accounts; she wrongs me deeply."

"You must recollect she is young and thoughtless, and you have spoilt her a little

by your devotion ; one word from you will make all right ; some foolish speech she heard about you first vexed her."

" But if she have not more confidence, she will be always making both herself and me wretched, for who can prevent others talking absurdly, or hinder false reports being circulated ?"

" I assure you you will have nothing to complain of when you see her ; perhaps I was wrong to mention it, but if I had not, you would have been puzzled if she had appeared offended and cold when you met."

" Thank you ; I would far rather know. I will call to-morrow, but will she be at home ? I shall come before luncheon. Do not tell her of this ; give her these flowers, and tell her I called in the hope of seeing her, and that my absence has been unavoidable. Where was it I passed you yesterday ? I wonder I did not see you."

" In Regent Street, near Howell and James."

" Ah ! we had just left the lawyers, and were

discussing a most important question ; I should not have noticed an elephant and castle at that moment. You must have seen how much I was occupied."

" You did look very anxious ; but your companion's beauty was the great evil."

" Poor thing ! she is sadly changed ; however, you shall hear more another time. I really must go. I cannot help feeling hurt at Adeline's suspicions ; we have never had a shadow of a misunderstanding yet, and I had not expected any difficulty about this. I do dread anything disagreeable like this, for any irritation in affection sullies its clear brightness ; and I very much doubt whether what we call lover's quarrels are ever entirely forgotten ; they leave a hidden scar, even though it be but slight ; I would avoid them most sedulously. Now, good-bye, and thank you for your kind sympathy. Unless anything very unforeseen happens, I shall be here to-morrow morning ; but I would rather that Adeline did not expect me."

Marion succeeded in softening Adeline's in-

dignation in some degree, and even won from her an expression of regret that she had persisted in her determination of going out. Her account of Vernon's visit and his message had produced this shade of improvement in Adeline's feelings ; but this soon wore off, and before evening she appeared to have relapsed into her former mood.

Vernon felt grieved and hurt after he left Marion. He had anticipated seeing Adeline, and the disappointment of not doing so would alone have ruffled him ; but when he found that she had doubted him, and had attributed his absence to unkind motives, a keen sense of injustice oppressed him, but his naturally bright and sanguine disposition induced him to anticipate a satisfactory explanation. As he thought of Adeline, of all her loveliness and fascination, and remembered how quick and excitable her feelings were, he made every excuse for her which tenderness and ardent affection could suggest.

How differently Stanley would have felt under such circumstances ! For he would have

dwelt upon every disagreeable minutæ, and by recalling every painful incident, have made himself miserable.

Oh! the incalculable evils of this want of faith and confidence! I think we seldom reflect sufficiently upon them; we forget how many hours of bitter recollections, how much painful intercourse is produced by allowing ourselves to suspect another, when we have no proof against them. Who can tell the agonised feelings of repentance and sorrow which have overwhelmed many, when they have discovered how deeply they have wronged another? who can describe those hours of anguish, where perhaps they find their doubts have created a wound which no after tenderness can fully heal—for love shrinks from any misunderstanding, any painful association, and though in its fulness and richness it does pour a balm over these inroads into its happiness, there are but few who can feel an equal calm, an equal peace return as that which rested upon their hearts before the first adverse wind had breathed upon their love, and disturbed the depth of its repose.

Few people are capable of feeling the purer, higher passion of love—of that love “which thinketh no evil !” Pride and selfishness corrupt even our best feelings, and stain the holiest gift of Heaven.

There is a depth and power, which is often overlooked in the observation of Luther, “that there is no moral virtue without pride or sadness ;” and over the more gentle elements of our nature ; these clouds have a colder and more obscuring shadow.

The petty tumults and vexations of life should not be allowed to exert their baneful influence upon the atmosphere of affection—let that be kept unruffled. And oh ! that women would think of this seriously, and seek to preserve the links which bind them to the object of their love, bright and unsullied ; let no reproaches, no bitter censures escape them ; let man never doubt the affection of home ; let it be as a beacon of light, pure and steadfast, which he knows will never be extinguished ; let him feel that he has woman’s love, that it is ever open to him as a blessed harbour of refuge, that he may come back to it, that its

warm, saving arms will be ever extended to receive him, to soothe him when the billows of life are foaming around him ; and this conviction must exercise a softening influence upon him—will arise like a gentle image of good between him and his fierce, wayward desires, and, “when life hath half become a weariness, and hope thirsts for serener waters,” he will turn to that affection which has never wounded him, he will seek that heart which he knows has always beat with ceaseless ardour for him, and which will now greet him with almost more than mortal tenderness.

And the reward of this patient, enduring affection will come at last, in the happiness of ministering to the hopes, and soothing the anxieties of the wearied and sorrowful, the full heart of a loving woman will find its peace, and the painful hours of watching and suspense will be forgotten in the richness of fulfilled anticipations.

But if a man has met with harshness or taunting words, if his stormy passions have been aroused by reproaches, he will shrink from returning to her who has written a page of



such unpleasant images on his memory, who has given an enduring form to feelings which, had they been passed over with calm endurance, might have vanished for ever.

END OF VOL. I.

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